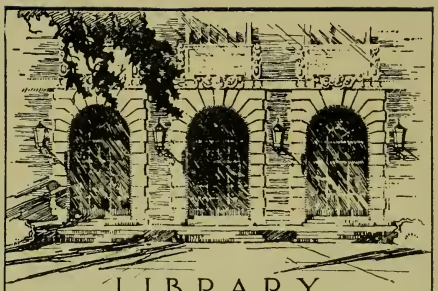

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
G626m
v.2

THE

MYRTLE AND THE HEATHER.

VOL. II.

THE

MYRTLE AND THE HEATHER

A TALE

By A. M. GOODRICH

AUTHOR OF 'GWEN' 'CLAUDIA'
ETC

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

LONDON

JOHN W. PARKER AND SON WEST STRAND

1857

[*The Author reserves the right of Translation*]

LONDON:
SAVILL AND EDWARDS, PRINTERS, CHANDOS STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.

823
G626m
v.2

THE

MYRTLE AND THE HEATHER.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Knew not the double-dealing of a smile,
Nor aught that makes men's promises a blank,
Or deadly snare.

WORDSWORTH.

BEATRICE had free admission to Lady St. Helens' boudoir; so had Horace; Anne came seldom there; and this morning the brother and the sister were together. Beatrice felt hopeless of obtaining the Countess's immediate attention, when she perceived how pre-engaged she appeared to be. She was seated at her writing-desk, and various proof-sheets of poetry strewed the ground on either side of her.

'See, my dear,' she said, 'A— has sent me his poem to revise; all this must be done before post-time. Don't interrupt me, for worlds. If you like, you may stay, for you are a dear, quiet thing; and you may gather up, and arrange all the sheets on my right hand. I have set my heart on taking two or three of the best to Miss Evelyn, if there be

time. Now, not a word; see—that line is an improvement, I flatter myself.'

The lady looked radiant with animation.

'Certainly she does love to serve her friends,' thought Beatrice. 'I don't suppose that I shall be able to consult her to-day.'

Trying to dismiss her own affairs from her mind, she obeyed Lady St. Helens' injunctions, and put together the leaves which were scattered near her; but her fancy would wander away from the poem which she tried to read, to the romance of her own life. The conversation with Lady Rhoda came back, word for word, with persevering distinctness; she closed her eyes, she tried to deafen her ears, and to forget it. Then she went over again and again her last hints. On what were they founded? Why had she not asked? Yet how could she, disclaiming, as she did, all right to question the state of Mr. Lindsay's heart? Then returned the happy hours (happy they were) passed with Anne and Horace yesterday, and the interruption of Lady Rhoda's appearance in the doorway with reproving eye. From all this torment what could she escape to save the equally harassing subject of the manager's letter? In vain did she read over, with renewed diligence, the stray leaves of A—'s poem; it made not the slightest impression on heart or brain; and when Lady St. Helens began to examine her as to its merits, she proved totally ignorant even of its incidents.

'Either, my dear, you are what I never suspected you to be—one of those musical idiots who, showing genius in their art, are utterly destitute of an idea

beyond, or your head is quite full of something else. Are you composing an opera? Now I look at you, you seem very woe-begone!'

'Oh, no! not that; but I confess my thoughts have wandered, and, when you are quite at liberty, I have no doubt you will allow me to tell you where, for I am sadly in want of your advice.'

'Everybody is. I am torn in pieces. You have excited my curiosity; you have ruined poor A—. I can't work at this, unless my whole heart is in it. Besides, I am quite exhausted. I must turn to something fresh: let that something be you, Beatrice.'

'I am very sorry I have interrupted you—called off your attention.'

'You certainly have; it can't be helped now. Is your affair likely to be a long one? Not one of the heart, I trust, for those are interminable. Or is it merely that old Lord C— has laid his coronet at your feet (I knew he would), and you hesitate, as you well may, to pick it up? I say, at once, enjoy your beauty and your talents in freedom a little longer.'

'Dear Lady St. Helens, it is a pity for you to waste your wit and your time on a subject so widely different from the real one, and such as, I assure you, I could decide for myself, without asking you to bestow a moment's thought on it. If you are bent on despatching my business now, will you be kind enough to read this letter?'

The Countess took the letter, read it at a glance, threw it from her with a gesture of contempt:

'Refuse it at once.'

'Yes,' said Beatrice, in a melancholy tone; 'I know that. I have—but—'

The Countess quitted her seat, and very beautiful she looked in her smiling kindness. She cast her arm round the young girl, and said, caressingly:

'Why, I verily believe you are disappointed?'

'I am,' said Beatrice; and her tears began to fall.

'Silly child!' said Lady St. Helens, kissing her forehead. 'Can you suppose I have nothing better in store for you than this which I bid you reject with scorn? I—I have a right to be angry with this creature for anticipating my ideas—for trying to rob me of my property; for mine you are, Beatrice. Was I not the first to recognise, the first to bring to light, your incomparable talents? (Beatrice's heart beat quickly.) Yes; your beautiful cheek may flush with hope, and it shall be mine to accomplish it. I will never rest satisfied till I see you on the pinnacle of fame—sulla cima dell' ertà: but, my dear, you are not going to take flight from the boards of a theatre in Edinburgh. You shall go with me to Paris this winter. There, and in London, in the spring, I am resolved to obtain for you engagements infinitely more brilliant than this man can offer.'

'But, Lady St. Helens,' gasped Beatrice, disengaging herself from her friend's embrace, 'you know that I promised my grandfather not to go on the stage—this career is closed to me.' The girl's voice might have betrayed to a less selfish listener the deep struggle these words of resolute self-denial had cost her.

'Nonsense, stuff! you are mad!' cried Lady St. Helens. 'Your whole fortune is not to be thrown away in submission to one blind old man's prejudice: weak and foolish in the extreme to think of such a mode of proceeding! Your grandfather ruined himself, and would you let him ruin you? Of course not. I consider you entirely under my care and guidance. I shall act, I shall decide for you. I take the whole responsibility upon myself.'

'How can you take the responsibility of a broken promise on you?' cried Beatrice, incautious, in her real distress, of giving offence. 'How can you free me from the duty of obeying my grandfather, even if your judgment and my own heart do not corroborate his decision? You are very kind, very zealous to serve; but a little consideration, a little coolness, will convince you that your view is impracticable.'

'Never fear; you shall not be scolded or *banned* as an undutiful child. I will arrange the whole; and if there are any scruples left, I will write to Mr. Howard. There—let that quiet you. Three words from him will convince your grandfather at any time.'

'No, no, they will not. I cannot retract my promise.'

'Miss Courtenay,' interrupted the Countess, haughtily, 'if you persist in these absurd ideas, you will soon weary those who wish to serve you.' She paused, and then, as if with increasing ire, continued: 'Moreover, I am inclined to suppose that my views are likely to be quite as practicable, quite as justifiable, as any a young lady of eighteen may think fit to form; perhaps, rather more so than some she may entertain—'

Beatrice stood amazed at the change in her patroness's manner.

'Yes, Miss Courtenay; I begin to perceive my error. I acknowledge that it is wrong to despise any one. Where self-interest sharpens the discernment, those one has been accustomed to regard as fools will see further than generous, unsuspecting natures can. I will counsel you while yet there is time. Believe me, the path to which I point is your path to fortune,—worthy of your talents—far worthier than the very commonplace road you seem inclined to tread.'

Beatrice remained still in mute astonishment.

'I am wholly at a loss,' she faltered, at last; 'may I beg you to explain—'

'No doubt you are amazed! You never thought I could suspect, Beatrice Courtenay. And you were right; my whole soul is foreign to such a course. I never should, unless a meaner than myself had raised the veil: now I see plainly what is under it.'

Beatrice clasped her hands, and, in a tone of extreme distress and some indignation, exclaimed:

'Lady St. Helens, what can you mean?'

The Countess advanced some steps towards her, and, with a smile full of mockery, replied:

'My dear Beatrice, you are a delightful actress; —we are all agreed on that point. Then, why shun the stage, where you may honestly enchant us with your art? But you are scrupulous. I understand you. You are under no vow not to practise it in private life.'

She turned her back on her, and walked to her writing-table. Beatrice followed her, white as marble.

'In mercy, in justice, tell me what you suspect—what you accuse me of.'

Lady St. Helens seated herself; she pointed to an ottoman, and said:

'Sit down, Miss Courtenay, sit down; you are painfully agitated. Justice and mercy are grand-sounding words: you shall have both, as far as I can yield them. Your own heart must tell you all, and more than all, that any other can accuse you of. As to my doubts, I frankly acknowledge that nothing will remove them but compliance with my wishes. You think, sagaciously enough, that to go on the stage would prove a greater bar to your marrying Sir Roderic's nephew than any other mode of pursuing the profession which you have embraced. Is it not so?'

Beatrice started from her seat—cheek, brow, and neck in one indignant glow:

'I will not meet this accusation with one word of self-defence. Let me go. I contemplated quitting Duror before I spoke with you.'

'Beatrice,' interrupted Lady St. Helens, in a tone which was less severe, if little less insulting, 'if at eighteen you have been silly enough to fancy yourself in love, I can forgive that; but I cannot forgive any attempt to play a double part with me, nor will I permit your folly to be injurious to yourself or others. It would be ungrateful and dishonourable in the highest degree, were you to entangle Horace's affections. I have pointed out to you a course in which honour and independence are to be secured. By this, and by no other means, can you retain the favour and protection which hitherto have been

bestowed on you. Now, not a word in reply. My head aches terribly. You have made me quite ill. Leave me, Miss Courtenay, pray.'

Beatrice, thus repulsed, obeyed: to contend with the Countess was impossible, to encounter Anne or Horace would be dreadful. She hastened out of the house, assured by Horace's lameness that she should not meet them there.

Now, which was the most perfect actress of the two, Lady St. Helens or Beatrice? The former, the moment that the door closed on the orphan over whom she was tyrannizing, exclaimed:

'What a simpleton the girl is!—she shall give way, I am resolved. I had devised the whole plan, and did not want this impertinent interference with it; it has been very mischievous—forced me to break it to her so suddenly. To get her on in private life, would be an affair by far too tedious and humdrum. I have no inclination whatever to incur the blame of every one, by letting her marry Sir Roderic's nephew. I don't want poor Horace to ruin himself by such folly, I am sure; yet all the world would agree with Sir Roderic in saying it was my fault. The only way I can guard against such an accusation, is by announcing very opposite intentions with respect to her. I will insist on compliance with my suggestions, or I will wash my hands of her altogether. I am going the right way to work. She was stung to the quick by my words.'

CHAPTER XXXV.

Oh ! my arrow-wound of grief !—OSSIAN.

BEATRICE took the path which she thought least of all likely to be selected by any guest at the Castle, and hurried up the woody bank till she had gained a height sufficient to deem herself secure from interruption. Sitting down on the knotty root of a tree, she gave way, without restraint, to the grief and pain which she felt with intensity. She could not, at first, recall her thoughts from what was past sufficiently to consider the future. As her emotion subsided, almost her first feeling was that of extreme repugnance to return to the house, to encounter any individual in it. Horace must recognise the contrast between such avoidance of him and her conduct on the preceding day, when she had so gaily and innocently shared Anne's endeavours to amuse him. What inference would he draw from it ? She knew not; she only knew that she could not induce herself to repair to that room again.

'I must quit Duror immediately—that must be my first step. I will write to my aunt to say that I am coming; I will tell Lady St. Helens that I

relinquish her favours—that I withdraw all claim (such claim as she used voluntarily to give me) to her services. Is it possible that she can think my present decision renders me less deserving of them? How strange!—and she has been generous, kind beyond anything I could look for; surely those impulses cannot wholly cease, and be succeeded by others of a contrary character. Yet, if her anger should subside, her former kindness return, could I again welcome it, and again confide in it? Can there be any reality, any truth in her horrible suspicions? I cannot believe that she entertains them; but she spoke of another—a meaner—who had raised the veil;—mean, indeed, who could thus malign me! O that she had not driven her from me without further explanation! Shall I seek it when she—when both are cooler? But, first of all, I will show her that I am ready to go—no attempt to conciliate shall be subject to the imputation that I desire to retain her patronage.'

Again the remembrance of Lady St. Helens' violence returned. Beatrice shuddered as she thought of the possibility that, under its influence, the incensed Countess might communicate what she considered her legitimate cause of indignation—to others. By others, Beatrice felt that she understood Horace or his sister; and here again grief overpowered her, and bound her to the spot.

Sir Roderic, meanwhile, gun in hand, was coming down the bank on which Beatrice was sitting; his dog startled her, and she sprang to her feet. Sir Roderic stood before her, near enough to perceive the tears still wet on her cheek.

'Miss Courtenay!' he exclaimed, in a tone of pity. He knew enough of her position as an orphan, and as the Countess's protégée, not to think it strange to find her in distress, though her sudden appearance on this spot surprised him. A beautiful woman weeping was sure to touch his heart; nor was that all: something in form or feature at this moment reminded him more strongly than ever of Gerald Courtenay.

'My dear Miss Courtenay,' he continued, 'it would have astonished me less had I found Maxwell's active daughter here. Remember, ascent and descent are very different things. You shall honour me by making use of my arm for the latter, and we will diminish its difficulties and dangers by choosing a somewhat circuitous route.'

The kindness and good-nature of his manner were soothing to Beatrice, and she accepted in silence his proffered arm.

'I have been inclined more than once,' he said, with a slight hesitation, 'to mention to you that I can't but fancy that I must have known something of your father, Miss Courtenay;—Gerald was his name, was it not?'

'Yes,' replied Beatrice.

'You never heard him speak of me?' continued Sir Roderic, venturing still further, in defiance of risk.

'No; but then I was brought up by my grandfather, in England.'

'And your father was usually abroad?'

'Yes; we went to him at Naples, and there he died,' answered Beatrice, with a failing voice.

'Ah! I knew him at Baden— But the subject is painful to you; only let me say how glad I am that the Countess's favours should be showered on Gerald Courtenay's daughter,' said Sir Roderic, heartily.

'I am afraid,' began Beatrice, then paused, and substituted for any allusion to the Countess's displeasure the words — 'I must very soon quit Duror.'

This intelligence being agreeable to Sir Roderic, redoubled his cordiality.

'I hope you have not visited our mountain fastnesses without pleasure,' he said. 'I assure you, none who have shared, will ever be able to divest themselves of the memory of the delight you have imparted. This place will never wear the aspect again which it has worn during these few weeks. An enchantress has been here; and when she retires, we shall have only ruins and rubbish where we lately saw gilding and jewels.'

'Oh! no,' replied Beatrice, brightening into a smile; 'without doubt, Lady St. Helens' taste and fascinations spread an influence around wholly belonging to them wheresover she goes; but when that passes away, your landscape will not lose its beauty, nor the ties that bind you to it their strength. Besides, if she considers how happily it has been exerted, she may be as willing as yourself to return hither.'

'She was not the enchantress of whom I spoke; and as to a return,' said Sir Roderic, 'I know not whether that would be desirable. Miss Courtenay, we Highlanders are a thriftless, needy race; and as to this castle, which my lady has amused herself by

making so fine, I don't know how it is to stand, unless Horace finds some way of propping it up. There, you see, I speak to you as the daughter of an old friend, not too proud to deplore the past, and the share I have had in it, and confident that I can claim your sympathy without having to reproach myself with want of caution.'

'It is but fair,' thought the Baronet to himself, 'that she should know the truth. She is a girl of some spirit, I have seen. It is as well to give her a chance of perceiving that any nonsense between Horace and herself would be just as injurious to her interests as to his. Too bad of Lady St. Helens to have thrown them together so recklessly as she has! When I told her of it, after the opera, she treated me with the contempt which she always heaps on me. There is nothing she would not sacrifice for her amusement. I am in the right path now, and I will go on. I am only doing my duty by Horace, and by poor Courtenay's child.'

'The fact is,' he continued, in a tone of confidence, 'when I come to look into things, I find affairs much more involved than I had any idea of. I am sure I would have pulled up long since, sooner than injure Horace; but Maxwell is an uncommonly clever fellow—too clever. I am half afraid lest it should prove at the last that he has feathered his own nest so comfortably that not much remains for us; and, indeed, I don't know that Horace could do anything wiser than try to win his not less clever daughter to set matters all straight again. If any one could hold a falling property together, she could; and then her interest in the people—her true

Highland heart! Miss Courtenay, if any one can save Horace and Duror, it must be she! I don't apologize to you for speaking so confidentially. Your affection for Anne (as good a girl as ever breathed) must give you an interest in what so nearly concerns her happiness as the welfare of her brother. I know I shan't repent of this.

'And now don't think too hardly of me, Miss Courtenay, if in future you hear me spoken of as an extravagant fellow who has worked all this mischief; —don't believe it, either; enough was done before I added my share, and really I brought Horace here for the express purpose of placing before him a means of rectifying it ere it is too late. I only trust he will not be mad enough to reject it.'

'Sir Roderic, indeed I think you must regret what you are now saying,' interrupted Beatrice, with distress. 'Surely, Anne, Mr. Lindsay himself, are the only persons you should speak to thus.'

'I must soon, I know; but I fancied that a confession so frank as I have been making might gain me valuable support on your side. At any rate, a full knowledge of circumstances must show,—' he paused, as if unwilling to proceed, then added, 'that no man was ever less in a position to follow his own fancies than is Horace.'

Beatrice involuntarily drew away her hand from the Baronet's arm, and walked on with a quickened step. Sir Roderic regained her side, and affecting to lose all caution, yet all the while speaking by design, exclaimed:

'There is nothing else for it. A marriage with Maxwell's daughter alone can set things right.

We must reconcile ourselves to this view as well as—'

'What!' interrupted Beatrice, in a tone of scorn very strange to her lips, 'do you speak thus of Judith Maxwell? Can you imagine her a woman to be thus disposed of? Let Mr. Lindsay seek her in all sincerity, or never hope to win.'

She stood before her astonished companion majestic in her beauty, repelling the insult offered to her rival as one to herself—it was one to her womanhood.

'I quite agree with you,' replied Sir Roderic, as soon as he had recovered himself. 'And, oh! Miss Courtenay, in compassion for all that I have disclosed to you, do not throw fresh difficulties in the path—do not seal Horace's ruin—do not—'

'Sir Roderic,' replied Beatrice, with dignity, 'I am no fit object of your dread or your supplications. Mr. Lindsay is as free to follow any path he may select as you can wish him; and I cannot be called on to continue a discourse as useless as it is painful.' She moved on.

'You must forgive me,' began Sir Roderic; 'I cannot part from you in anger. You must perceive that concern for the happiness and the interest of both—for the honour of my nephew—impelled me to speak.'

Beatrice made no answer.

'I must entreat you to consider that Anne and Lady St. Helens are not your only friends in this family. True and zealous they both will prove, I hope; but I should like a share in serving you, whenever such a pleasure may present itself.'

'I would not in my utmost need accept your service,' thought Beatrice, her colour mounting, her eye sparkling with indignation, or the increasing rapidity of her movements.'

'I may be assured that this secret is safe with you?'

'Quite,' replied Beatrice, unable to suppress contempt.

'It will soon cease to be one.'

Beatrice was silent, suspecting Sir Roderic of a wish to engage her again in conversation. At last the Castle was reached; the gong was proclaiming the approach of dinner, and the sound afforded a fresh excuse for a hurried entrance. Beatrice crossed the hall, and ran up the stairs. On the landing-place she met Horace coming from the room which opened on it, moving slowly, and helping himself with a stick.

'How are you, Miss Courtenay?' he asked; 'I have not seen you to-day.' His tone was half melancholy, half reproachful.

'No,' said Beatrice, 'I have stayed out much longer than I intended.' She knew there was prevarication in her reply, and she turned away as she spoke it: then feeling how little reason he had to expect ungracious treatment, she added:

'But you are better?—I hope you are better?'

'Yes,' replied Horace, his despondency vanishing, 'now that you ask me.'

Beatrice hastened on. Anne followed her to her room.

'Such a long, dull day for Horace and for me!' she said.

Beatrice turned round, threw herself into her arms, and burst into tears.

'My dear child,' cried Anne, 'I know you have had much to think of—to try you.'

'You don't know half,' said Beatrice. 'The Countess makes it the condition of her future favour, that I should go on the stage. I can never comply.'

'Impossible!' exclaimed Anne, indignantly.

'Oh! my dear Anne, I ought not to have told you now. Pray do not show resentment: if you do—'

'—It will make everything much worse. I understand. So will your red eyes. There—wash them, like a good child, and make haste.'

'I must write to my aunt, and tell her that I will come to London immediately.'

'Then, at least, remove from my lips the promise of secrecy of this morning. Let me say something to Horace which will make your conduct seem less strange. Let me tell him of the proposal you have rejected; that will sufficiently account for a harassing and occupied day.'

'Do as you think best,' replied Beatrice, with reluctance; 'only, for every one's sake, do not reveal Lady St. Helens' displeasure.'

CHAPTER XXXVI.

And hard unkindness' altered eye,
That mocks the tear it forced to flow.

GRAY.

BEATRICE'S face, in spite of her utmost endeavours, did not say much for the enjoyment of the past day, nor of the present hour. Nevertheless, she had one secret source of satisfaction in her heart, which she scarcely acknowledged to herself. It was clear to her that Lady Rhoda's suspicions of Horace had been derived from Sir Roderic, and not from himself; and she felt far more kindly disposed towards her first self-constituted adviser than to either of her successors. But that she should resume anything like ease of deportment towards Horace in the presence of the Countess or of Sir Roderic, was quite impossible. The good-humoured frankness of the latter might indeed have in some degree restored her to self-possession; but the former, singularly mistress of all 'the cruel language of the eye,' and not too generous to direct many 'a word with two meanings, the traitor's shaft and shield,' against any object of present wrath, made her feel like one who moves dizzily on the edge of a precipice. After dinner, she escaped

to her room, and wrote her letter to Mrs. Lewis Fane; the post was gone, it is true, but she felt that she could not rest till it was accomplished: it was a work of small difficulty, and when Anne entered, she put it into her hand. Anne ran her eyes over it, and with a sigh observed:

'I suppose it will be best—' then casting aside reserve, she added, 'for you know it was dreadful at dinner.'

'Very,' replied Beatrice, with a shiver.

'It is rather a comfort that Judith Maxwell has made her appearance.' (Beatrice gave a slight start.) 'She really is an amusing girl; she has a sort of odd, blunt humour.'

'Oh! surely she is exceedingly clever,' said Beatrice, thoughtfully.

'Perhaps she is. I really never have had much time to think about her. Come, let us go downstairs.'

When they entered the drawing-room, they saw that Judith was seated in the window, beside which Horace's couch had been wheeled; and she was evidently entertaining him by the details she was giving. The Countess had left them alone, and, with a shrug of her shoulders, observed to Anne:

'She is always talking about this wondrous peasantry; I am sick of it.'

'Oh! that is what Horace likes,' replied Anne, going to join them; while poor Beatrice knew not where to place herself.

At length Horace asked for some music; it seemed his only chance of hearing Beatrice's voice. Convinced that she sedulously kept away from his

sofa, his resentment at the unexpected change in her showed itself in his talking and laughing with Judith more than usual; but his secret uneasiness made him weary of a mode of conduct which had no visible effect on Beatrice, and he now pleaded humbly for a song. Unfortunately, Judith, who rarely listened to any music, had been struck by an air of Beatrice's own composition which she had once heard her sing, and she asked her now to repeat it. Such a selection gave Beatrice no little pain; but, without any expression of it, she assented. The melody was one of singular plaintiveness, and the simple lines, entitled *La Partenza*, had been composed as her farewell to Florence, to her grandfather, to her childhood: to the two first she might hope to return, to the last never. Her present train of thought made her enter into the feeling of the song with a peculiar sense of it. She suddenly broke down. Horace almost sprang from his couch; but Anne was by her, and soothed her gently.

'I am very silly,' whispered Beatrice; 'help me to get over it. I will play the accompaniment of this song—and do you sing the words.'

Anne complied; and by the time the song was over, Beatrice's composure was regained.

'Ready tears are invaluable,' said Lady St. Helens, approaching the piano. 'How do you manage it, my dear? I wish you would tell me. Why, you are all looking surprised — indignant. Am I wrong in supposing this was done on purpose? I am sure it went very well with the words! Show me that you forgive my mistake, Beatrice, by

just giving me my guitar: it is my turn now to contribute to the general amusement.'

The Countess sang one of her favourite Spanish songs with more than her ordinary vivacity, yet it seemed to fall heavily on the ears of her listeners. She began another in Italian, more intelligible to them, and she pronounced it with peculiar distinctness and emphasis; to do so was one of her chief excellences.

'Ingrata!' repeated Horace, as she concluded. 'I have always fancied, when I have heard you sing that before, that it was 'ingrato,' not *a*.'

'And so it was!' returned the Countess, with a smile of malice. 'I have changed it; there is more point, more meaning in it now. Men are not half so ungrateful as women; it is idle nonsense to call them so. Not that I blame women much for what in fact is their weakness. They are so silly, poor things! and where there is little sense, there is little feeling. I am convinced of that.' And she twanged the strings of her guitar in a manner that was singularly jarring.

'You are severe on your own side,' said Horace; 'and though complimentary to ours, your compliment is such as no man would for the world subscribe to the truth of. The only effect of the accusation would be to make us turn for comfort to some face that should gainsay it.'

Beatrice, smarting with the wounds of the darts discharged against her, did not raise her eyes; yet she judged from the sound of Horace's voice, that his looks were directed towards Judith, whose coun-

tenance at that moment, though she could ill understand what was passing around her, was expressive of considerable indignation. What then were Anne's feelings? Such as, in avoidance of the aggravation of evil, she was accustomed to keep to herself.

The more Beatrice reflected, during a sleepless night, on the Countess's mode of proceeding with her, the less room she perceived for any attempt at conciliation.

'She is very cruel; and the most painful effect of her present cruelty is the doubt which, in spite of my repugnance, it will suggest as to the motives of her past kindness. Selfish, surely, they must have been; and I strive in vain to feel again the warm gratitude with which I used to glow. In lesser trials, when vehemence and impetuosity have rendered her unjust, confidence in her affection has carried me through; now it is shaken—this undermining is worst of all. If I could but cling to the belief that her anger, her unfairness, do still proceed from love—at least from a desire to serve me! She always thinks the plans which she devises the only wise ones to be pursued; and so have I hitherto—in all that regarded myself, I mean. I have never opposed my judgment to hers; and it is not judgment now—if she would but remember that! I do not dispute the efficacy of her means to my end; I only plead that I am not free to adopt them; and if I dared, I would tell her all it costs me to resist. I might have received a sympathy from her on this point beyond that which Anne can give. She could well understand how much I relinquish. But

she would not support me through the sacrifice; she would only increase the difficulty of making it. I must not betray myself. She would stir up in me everything which most opposes obedience to my grandfather's command.

'Perhaps she considers that I am but weak, and violence will overcome me. I do not think such as she exerted to-day would ever prevail. Ah! if she were to find that out, and to employ a gentler method! I believe I am safe from that greater danger.

'But has my past conduct given her a right to count upon weakness? I have certainly found it difficult, almost impossible, to resist her. All blameless concessions were her due. I never reached the point to stop at until now.'

Beatrice was beginning to recognise for herself that which Lady Rhoda had fully recognised for her;—that she occupied a position of peculiar difficulty for one of youth and inexperience.

'I am quite sure that I am right to withdraw—to resign those claims which she used so readily to admit. Nay, even if she desire to acknowledge them afresh, I ought not to permit them to be renewed without hesitation.'

While Beatrice contemplated the spectacle of the Countess repentant and caressing, she was not aware how little likely it was to offer itself to her. She could recall feebler instances of a somewhat similar behaviour to the present, when Lady St. Helens had exclaimed: 'Beatrice, you have a divine temper, and I am too sensitive, possess too much of the irri-

tability of genius, not to try it: this Anne has no idea of, but you have. You can understand me.'

And Beatrice at those moments had felt it a privilege to bear with her, and had even been beguiled into a doubt whether Anne was exactly qualified by nature to judge the excitable Countess justly in all respects.

'I will not believe,' cried Beatrice, starting into fresh wakefulness, 'that she has ever seriously harboured the suspicion she declared. How barbarous, then, to insult me with it! But I begin to perceive that it is her temper, when provoked, to hazard all things—to say whatever occurs to her as most likely to crush and to wound. When calmer, she would repair the mischief; but this cannot be repaired. At least, I mean that it must banish me from this home. I cannot remain under the same roof with Mr. Lindsay. Sir Roderic, his aunt, Lady Rhoda, however opposite in other opinions, alike pronounce that no folly or rashness can equal that of his seeking to unite himself with me. Why is this? Because I am portionless — friendless; hampered, too, with an engagement which, laudable though it be, they perhaps deem it degrading to fulfil in the only mode in which I can fulfil it? I regard it not as humiliation. I suffer no loss in my own eyes. I will not be crushed down thus. I will go hence, and accomplish my purpose; to that, and that alone, devoting my energies. Did I not silence Flavio's importunities thus?—'

Beatrice stopped short, more sensible than she was willing to be, that she had not then, as now, to silence her own heart too.

'When I am gone, his uncle will urge him to turn to Judith; and if he do—if he win her, she is worthy. Yes; she is calculated beyond all women to share the position which he will have to fill. Sir Roderic is right. This would be for his happiness; and he did seem to like her yesterday evening. I wish that he had never seen me: I am —can be but a stumbling-block in his way. I will leave him entirely to himself. Not a word, not a look, shall influence him. He shall believe, what ought to be the case, that one thought, one aim, engrosses me; and in this shall I be content to dissemble? No; I will make it true.'

Beatrice rose in the morning prepared to meet all that should assail her, from without or from within, with invincible resolution. Never was the saying, that 'deep waters are stillest,' more verified than by her demeanour. Horace was not at the breakfast-table; this was a relief, though Anne would not easily have forgiven comfort derived from the fact that he was still suffering from the effect of the injury he had sustained; and Beatrice reflected with no little tenderness on the cause. She looked very pale; and while Anne and Lady St. Helens marked this, the one spared all comment, and the other perceived a firmness in the girl's deportment which caused her at once surprise and anger.

The Countess's whole mode of proceeding now changed; altercation was too undignified to be renewed. With extreme frigidity she addressed Beatrice:

'Miss Courtenay, yesterday I required you to submit to my decisions, and expected you to regard

me as one empowered to make them when you were committed to my care. You have had time to reflect, and to recover from the extraordinary delusion which seemed to render you quite insensible to our relative positions.'

'I have reflected indeed, Lady St. Helens; I am sure I could not thoughtlessly persist in offending you. But I cannot acquiesce in any decisions which contradict my grandfather's injunctions.'

'Then, you mean that you intend to follow your own view of the subject?'

'His view—'

'A person must be wonderfully calm to keep so close to the point, Miss Courtenay. I also can speak with accuracy. Understand me: if this be your resolution, you must henceforward make or mar your own fortunes. I cannot attempt to serve one so stubborn.'

'I do not expect that you should,' replied Beatrice, 'when your ideas of my duty are so different from my own.' She sighed, and continued, with timidity: 'May I, without offending you, express the gratitude which I have felt for the kindness you showed me when you understood me better?'

'I never understood you half so well,' replied Lady St. Helens, with a disdainful smile. 'You are quite right to express your sense of gratitude in the past tense—'have felt—'

'Hope still to feel,' interrupted Beatrice, almost in tears.

'Pray, let us have no scenes—I am so sick of them. You ought to answer your letter to-day—'

'I will. I have written one to my aunt to ask

her to receive me; for you know, Lady St. Helens, I ought not to stay here.'

'It is Sir Roderic's house, not mine. But I suppose we shall all depart very soon. I shall, undoubtedly: I wish I had never come. It is always the case: the services which one goes most out of one's way to render, are always those repaid with the greatest ingratitude.'

Beatrice retired in silence, and in her own chamber again perused the manager's letter. She now felt herself too much oppressed by her sense of loneliness to attempt to carry out her first idea of making an appearance at a concert in Edinburgh. She knew that the Countess would give her no support, and felt as if her wrath would even pursue her, and ensure her defeat. As she completed her answer, Anne entered, and she placed it before her.

Anne glanced her eye over it.

'Very good. I told Horace you were going to write it. It will be impossible, Beatrice, to keep this fracas with Lady St. Helens long a secret—Her own conduct last night—besides, it would be injurious to you to make a mystery of it.'

'I don't suppose it will be possible to make a mystery of it,' said Beatrice, sadly; 'I don't want to make mysteries, but still I should like you to say as little as possible to your brother of this disagreement of opinion between Lady St. Helens and me. Your aunt is very cordial in her feelings towards Mr. Lindsay. It would grieve me to cause any alteration; and if he thinks, as you do, Anne, that she has not treated me with justice, he might —generously—now I know that no interference

could serve me—I desire none. I would much rather go to my own friends than stay any longer here; and I beg you not to tell your brother more than he already knows, until I am gone.'

'It shall be as you say, Beatrice. If anything can bring my aunt to her senses, it will be your gentle firmness. But this disagreeable affair is not to occupy the whole day, as yesterday.'

'I don't know,' replied Beatrice, with embarrassment. 'If I have to go so soon, I must be occupied.'

'You cannot go before you receive Mrs. Lewis Fane's answer. Precipitation would not at all become you.'

'Perhaps not; but still, I should like to be alone for a little.'

'Not to ponder over this painful subject; for painful to you I know it is in every way. You are young to disappointment—I do not mean disappointment of your own wishes, for there, I believe, you have had discipline enough, but in the characters of others. Lady St. Helens can be, has been to you, very fascinating.'

'Very,' said Beatrice, sorrowfully. She seemed to be gazing wistfully back into the past; but the scene at Interlaken recurred to her, and with the truthfulness which always led her to correct an impression the moment that she saw she was making a false one, she exclaimed, 'It is not perfect confidence that I have lost. I cannot say, Anne, that I long possessed it. I have often been greatly perplexed, and, therefore, never quite happy. I know not what I should have done, had not you been with

me ; and now, how very, very unhappy should I be if I had not you to speak to !'

This burst of tenderness towards the friend on whom she could rely, was the only testimony it was in Beatrice's nature to bear against those on whom she could not rely. Accustomed from infancy to the refinement of love with which Courtenay drew a veil over the errors of his son, she had imbibed the very same disposition. In solitude she could weep over and pray for the sins of those she loved, but it was not the smallest relief to her to acknowledge or to comment on them to other fellow-creatures. She did not now reveal to Anne her dawning suspicion that Mr. Howard, with his penetration, could not have been blind to Lady St. Helens' real character, and her consequent feeling that he ought not, therefore, to have entrusted her to her direction. Beatrice could not complain — not even of the Countess.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

And in that gentle mind a gentle strife it made.
CRABBE.

BEATRICE'S last day at Duror was come. Mrs. Lewis Fane's welcome had arrived, all arrangements were completed; Lady St. Helens was prepared to dismiss her with a chilling stateliness; Horace was angered and perplexed by the care with which she daily avoided him; Anne could not pretend to discern all the workings of her friend's mind, but she counselled forbearance and patience: 'Let her alone, poor child! Let her take her own quiet way. There is far too great a strain on her heart and mind for one so young.'

And Beatrice certainly had enough to contend with; she had detected a new enemy in her own heart, and could not silence the question 'What was become of her cordiality to Judith?'

On this last day, she set out for the English Cottage to take leave of Miss Evelyn, who welcomed her visit with expressions of the kindest possible interest. She had regarded Beatrice with lively sympathy and admiration from the first, and regretted that her endeavours to win her more

entirely from her reserve had not been crowned with better success. But Beatrice had never felt it possible to meet her as she would herself have desired, and now had less power to do so than ever. She could not open to Miss Evelyn the heart that was closed to Anne. She was like a frozen fountain—the water suspended in its flow, hanging in beautiful icicles, and chilling, as glaciers do, the air around. She could not make known to Miss Evelyn the cruel attacks which she had sustained; she could not lament Lady St. Helens' injustice; she could not tell that she had been forbidden, and had forbid herself, to listen to Horace's love — that Judith was placed between him and her. Judith, in her unembarrassed frankness and vivacity, must surely present an agreeable contrast to her own constrained demeanour.

Miss Evelyn, who had entertained a kind purpose of making further advances, and offering the friendship which she believed might be valuable to one so situated, felt that it was difficult to carry out the intention.

'You know, my dear Beatrice,' she said, 'how warm an interest I take in the accomplishment of your object — how truly I reverence it. Don't forget this;—don't forget that you leave an old woman at Duror who will rejoice to hear that you rejoice. Very conceited of her to think she will come into your mind, is it not? But still, if she do—if you ever feel that it would in any way be a comfort or relief to address her, remember, Beatrice, there is always a cordial welcome for you here: write to me when you feel disposed to do so.'

'Thank you—you are very kind,' answered Beatrice, in a low, earnest voice, and as if struggling with great depression.

Miss Evelyn perceived this with concern, and even alarm: she tried again to draw her forth.

'My dear child,' she said, 'you should not strive too much for that command over your emotions which I know you consider desirable, and which, in due measure, is so. You must not carry the principle too far; you cannot do so, without injury to the health of body and of mind.'

'Self-control is indispensable to me,' replied Beatrice, in a hurried tone. 'You do not know, you cannot imagine, how I am borne along, if once I yield to the tide of feeling. I have much to accomplish—much to contend with, and I must be calm.'

'But think, Beatrice, of the dangerous force of pent-up waters; and then, what is unnatural cannot last.'

'I know it cannot,' said Beatrice. 'I know, too, how far happier it is to be as Judith,—like a stream flowing in its natural channel, too full and free to be fretted and torn by petty obstacles—that goes on its way rejoicing.'

'Dear Beatrice, I wish you could be thus joyous!'

Beatrice shook her head. She rose to depart; she met the warm embrace Miss Evelyn proffered, and lingered to say:

'I have not seemed worthy of the privilege of knowing you; I have not appeared alive to it. But in my heart I have set more value on it than you

can suppose; and your kindness—your great kindness now—'

'Do not speak thus, my dear child. I understand you better, perhaps, than you think. What I wish for you, Beatrice, is, that in your aunt and Lady Rhoda, who is so zealous in your behalf, you may find tender and judicious friends.'

As Beatrice left the cottage, she said to herself:

'Shall I ever be able to derive that comfort from Lady Rhoda which Miss Evelyn would communicate, were I able to turn to her? I do not know; but I am sure I can rely on her truth; and if my aunt only reminds me sometimes of my grandfather, in look—in voice—in any way, that will indeed soothe and support me. Now I must go to Judith.'

At the garden-gate she met her. Though resolved to seek, she started back for a moment on finding her so near.

'I have taken leave of Miss Evelyn,' she said; 'and now, Judith—' She paused—she held out her hand; Judith caught it with frank cordiality, let go the gate, and placed herself at Beatrice's side, saying:

'We will walk back together.'

She retained Beatrice's hand, and led her by preference to the lowest (which was also the longest) road, running along the shore. The two girls walked on in silence, for both their hearts were full. Of course, Judith was the first to speak:

'Beatrice,' she said, pointing to the cliff which now came in view, 'I want to tell you frankly, there

was a time when I undervalued you—but it ended on that day. I have often thought since then, with self-reproach—and I will not let you depart without declaring it—of the misplaced haughtiness with which I addressed you there; and tones of contempt, of which I am now heartily ashamed, have rung in my ears—'

'But not in mine,' interrupted Beatrice. 'Dear Judith, I can well understand that you despised one who stood trembling before you.'

'Despised!' exclaimed Judith. 'How odious of me! And you—how nobly you overcame what was peril and dismay to you! How nobly, too, do you cast away all petty resentments, and consecrate yourself, in singleness of heart, to high purposes! Look, Beatrice, at that beautiful sea-bird; see how the waters roll off his unruffled feathers: just so do you shake from you everything that could soil or discompose your purity of nature.'

'Oh! Judith, pray do not bestow such unmerited praise on me. I have no such inward serenity as you dream of. My silence and reserve—I never expected those to please you.'

'Nor did they,' replied Judith, 'till I could discern something beyond.'

'But you cannot—you cannot see through them,' exclaimed Beatrice. She paused, then added, more calmly: 'At this moment, the appearance differs from the reality. I have never yet, in all my life, been able to speak frankly and freely all I thought and felt. You, perhaps, might have burst through the restraints that have bound me—I cannot. But

nothing is so painful to me as to have my thoughts forced back upon myself. I would much rather think of you, Judith; I would much rather tell you how I admire your energy, your warmth of love to all around you — your promptness to serve, your readiness to apprehend. May you live here honoured and beloved, as you deserve to be—blessing others, and yourself in them. This is the lot I foresee for you, and desire; and when it is fulfilled, remember me sometimes — remember that it was for none to know what Beatrice Courtenay felt or suffered, but that, whatever her own destiny, she could contemplate your happiness without envy.'

A smile of exceeding sweetness diffused itself over the face of Beatrice, as, suffering herself to be borne along on the current of feeling, she uttered these words. She had wrung the drop of gall from her heart with an heroic hand, and she experienced a depth of satisfaction which she could not communicate to her companion because forced to conceal its source: but that they were rays of love and peace which illumined her beauty, Judith recognised; she felt herself folded in Beatrice's arms, and a gentle kiss pressed on her lips.

'Adieu, Judith, adieu! Let us part here.'

'One moment, Beatrice. Bid me not leave you till I have told how heartily I desire your success —your happiness: but you know it. You have made me feel as I never felt before, that the streams of our lives are not to be here separated. There is some bond of union between us, Beatrice, though I know not what.'

Then bestowing an embrace warmer but not more earnest than the one she had received, she allowed Beatrice to depart.

'Surely, surely,' she exclaimed, as she looked after her, 'Horace Lindsay will bring her back, and I shall welcome her as I little thought I ever could while she seemed but a lovely picture. She can breathe and glow!'

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Then Nature all
Wears to the lover's eye a look of love.
THOMSON.

IT was evident to Horace that the Countess was no less aggrieved than himself by Beatrice's altered deportment; but he dreaded to comment on her manifestation of displeasure, lest he should injure rather than serve Beatrice. He hazarded some expressions of surprise that Miss Courtenay's departure should precede her own; to which his aunt frigidly replied, that it was Miss Courtenay's wish. Lady St. Helens failed to recognise generous forbearance in Beatrice's silence; she even suspected her of reserving the power of yielding, at a later period, to her command. Unaided in his attempts to investigate the mystery, Horace was reduced to solve it in the way most painful to himself, for he could not but date the estrangement of Beatrice from the period when he began to manifest more plainly the nature of his feelings.

So evident was her withdrawal from him during the days which intervened between her determination to depart and her departure, that he half resolved, on the last morning, not to appear at the breakfast-table. That is to say, he fancied he held this resolution; but had any unforeseen accident constrained him to carry it into effect, he would have suffered considerable vex-

ation. He was, in fact, the earliest to descend, in the vague hope of obtaining five minutes' uninterrupted conversation with Beatrice; but she having an intuitive conviction that if she quitted her chamber she should encounter him, remained in it till she was sure every one was assembled. She withdrew immediately that breakfast was over, accompanied by Anne, to prepare for starting; and Horace sauntered into the conservatory, and plucked, as he told himself, in pure idleness, the only beautiful white rose in bloom, which he managed to conceal from all eyes, after having monopolized it for his property.

Sir Roderic, only too happy to speed the parting guest, intended to lead Beatrice to the carriage; but just before it was announced, the gamekeeper desired to see him, and Horace, who had determinedly cherished the same intention, carried the point without even a stratagem. But, Beatrice on his arm, he felt that he had won no triumph; it was in vain that he had, by a look, checked Anne's movement to accompany her. Chilled by the reserve of her manner, he could not resolve to offer the white rose culled for her alone; and as the carriage-door closed, his embarrassment was exchanged for anger, and passionately snapping the blossom from its stem, he crushed it with his heel, as he turned again to the house.

'Cold-hearted, insensible, capricious, not a thought beyond herself and the few she has given herself to!' were his inward ejaculations; and an hour elapsed before he returned to the inhabited apartments, and heard Lady St. Helens say:

'Order a man and horse out: Miss Courtenay has left her pocket-book, with all her money in it, here

on the chimney-piece. I don't know what she could be thinking of.'

Horace retreated, snatched up his hat, and tried to wander into the court-yard carelessly. The man soon appeared, mounted; Horace crossed over, and stopped him at the gate:

'Here, I want a ride; give me the packet, I will take it.'

The man dismounted respectfully; Horace sprang into the saddle, disregardful of his lameness, and galloped down the avenue as if convinced that he was pursued. The inequalities of the ground checked his speed, and before he gained sight of the carriage, he had time for many reflections, the most consolatory of which was that Beatrice could not have been as cool as she appeared, or she would not have forgotten her pocket-book.

He reached the side of the carriage, checked the driver by a call, and held out the book as if he needed an apology. Beatrice, who had bid him adieu so coldly, did not witness his reappearance with like indifference; she had no time to assume it. Light sparkled in eyes which had evidently been drowned in tears since she entered the carriage, and the hand she extended trembled. These symptoms of emotion surprised and delighted Horace, who, not venturing to observe on them to her, turned hastily to Annunziata, and, in that language which he had studied to attain as one dear and familiar to Beatrice as her mother-tongue, he exclaimed:

'Why does your young mistress weep, Annunziata?'

'Eh! chi sa?' was the prelude to a multitude of reasons poured forth with a rapidity which allowed

Horace to retain but one: 'Was she not going, a lonely, friendless orphan, to that great city—London?'

Horace eagerly bent forward:

'You will not find only strangers there: I shall be in London as soon as you are. It is my home. You must allow me, as Anne's brother, to bid you welcome—to be of use to you.'

There was a joy on his face really unfeeling, considering the distress in which he found her, and it left on Beatrice's mind the humiliating conviction that the effect of several days' chilling reserve was destroyed by the greeting of one moment. Horace threw his bridle on his horse's neck, and rode leisurely homewards. He did not care how long he tarried, for he was enjoying the lovely scenery lying before him in a degree unequalled till that hour. The heather was in all its purple glory—a noontide sun was shining on it; the lake lay in placid beauty. How different from the day when he had battled with its fury for life! As he entered the woods whence he gained the first view of Duror, he lingered in the shade, indulging delightful visions for the future.

'I perfectly understand her now—perfectly. She feels herself constrained to pursue the path which she had marked out. She fancies that she has been letting time glide away in a manner not justifiable—that it would be betraying her duty to pause to listen to my voice. Resolved to silence the pleadings which she saw trembling on my lips, the violence offered to her own feelings made the change in her manner the more abrupt and forbidding. Yes, I cannot be mistaken: her look of recognition

now—her words and countenance when we parted on the beach, both to endanger life,—these are indelibly stamped on my memory—these put to flight every recurring fear. And now, what may I ask? I may surely tell her that I would not for a moment impede her in her course. I would but be near to support and to befriend her, till the hour comes when she esteems herself at liberty to turn to me and say, 'Now I am yours.' She, young as she is, is already disciplined for action. I have much need of training to qualify me to fill the post which Providence has assigned me; to this will I devote my thoughts and powers. Then will I bring my beautiful bride to my beautiful home, after I have striven to become more worthy of both.'

One-and-twenty, and in love, it is not surprising that Horace Lindsay felt quite capable of despising and of triumphing over all difficulties. His was a sanguine nature; he was never prepared for disappointments, and as yet had seldom experienced any. When trifling ones occurred, he had a singular facility of disbelief in them; in fact, he had already advanced his hopes to some further point. The buoyancy with which he recovered from failure might sometimes expose him to an accusation of fickleness, but this was a misinterpretation. When his feelings were deeply rooted, they were very stable. No man was more earnest in his friendships, nor more likely to maintain them; though numerous, they were well founded. His friends, various in character, had the same distinctive marks—high-mindedness and a chivalrous sense of honour; while all united in a lively admiration of Horace. He was esteemed by each the best fellow, the most thorough-

going friend, the truest heart, the least selfish companion, the finest temper among them. At Eton, at Oxford, he ran one course. With a slender allowance, and lavish promises of an increase of it from his uncle, which he had the shrewdness to discover were never meant to be executed (though he could not suspect that they were even designed to mislead), Horace maintained independence of character and freedom from debt. Men of his own age and treble his fortune never could understand his management, and refused to credit the smallness of his means. There were tales even of generosity which put wealthier ones to the blush. One great secret by which Horace kept himself free from embarrassment was the simplicity of his tastes and absence of ostentation. He was not emulous of other men's expenditure. It did not pique him that A.'s hunter was worth several hundred guineas, and that B. gave champagne luncheons, while he rode a hack and gave sherry. The companions he valued did not look coolly on him for such causes as these, and coveted his society for its own sake.

Horace was not vain; he was as averse to flattery as any man when he detected it, and very indifferent to approbation when it came from a source which he lightly esteemed. Nor was he conceited, though he certainly entertained an exhilarating idea of his own powers of pleasing, of his good looks, which were indisputable, and of the versatility of his talents. But his certainty of success where his feelings were deeply interested, sprang rather from the vehemence with which he desired it, than from an overweening confidence in his power of commanding it. He would not contemplate the defeat which he knew not how

he could endure. Yet at times was he overtaken by what he called abject despair, and both these moods had he lately gone through on the subject of Beatrice Courtenay. At this moment, however, he felt himself the very reverse of Tasso's lover:

'Molto brama, poco spera, e nullo chiede.'

He hoped, and was resolved to ask everything. As he exulted in the contemplated attainment of his wishes, he began to remember his uncle, and told himself that the time was certainly come when he ought to communicate his intentions to him. 'That was not possible while her assumed indifference seemed to convict me of madness and presumption. Now I cannot make known to him too soon what I do not expect him to welcome, but shall surely be able to convince him that he has no right to withstand. I have never asked him for any increase of allowance, nor will I now, though he has declared me his heir. I will seek a profession at once, if he approves it. Let me consider what I am best suited for.'

As Horace fell into this train of thought, he naturally recalled the objects which had of late been forcibly pressed on him by the energetic Judith. These were not to be lost sight of. Maxwell's evidently failing health came before him; and with it, while he felt that the greatest delicacy must be used to avoid the slightest appearance of superseding a man who had rendered valuable service, he began to contemplate the possibility of dwelling at Duror, and acting as his uncle's agent himself. As he finished building a castle which seemed to him very habitable, he arrived at that on which his tenure was more insecure than he knew of.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Mais l'homme sans arrêt dans sa course insensée,
Voltige incessamment de pensée en pensée.
Son cœur, toujours flottant entre mille embarras,
Ne sait ce qu'il veut, ni ce qu'il ne veut pas.

BOILEAU.

DISMOUNTING from his horse, not without the help of a stick, Horace limped into the house in search of Anne, who hastened to meet him:

'My dear Horace, were you fit to ride?'

'Quite. I could not exist in-doors on such a day as this. Come, now, and let us sit on the terrace.'

'No, indeed; I think you have a fever.'

'I think so too; and nothing will abate it but talking to you. After all, Anne, it is only a fever of happiness.'

'And last night you were wretched.'

'Very; but I need no more nursing. I have promised Beatrice to be in town as soon as herself.'

'Promised—what can you mean?' asked Anne, turning very pale.

'What can you mean by looking like *this?*' cried Horace, affectionately. 'Anne, you have been tiring yourself to death for me. Is that it?'

'No, no,' replied Anne, faintly; 'only let me be

quiet a moment.' Then she took his arm, and led him gently along the terrace to a bench placed under the wide-spreading shadow of a tree, and commanding a view of the lake beneath them. 'Here we shall be uninterrupted,' she said. 'Now for the meaning of your foolish words.'

'Foolish! why?' demanded Horace. 'I have made no mysteries with you. You know all: you saw that most provoking girl part from me looking like a snowdrift—as frozen as she has been for days past;—why, I quite understand. I can explain all that presently. You heard my aunt despatch Morland with her book. I borrowed his horse from him, and overtook the carriage. Oh! Anne! I shall never forget her look when she heard my voice: it was a look of welcome—not all the asseverations in the world shall make me doubt it—entirely against her will, I believe. Then the traces of recent grief and tears, how different from the marble composure I had last seen! Annunziata laid all to her anticipation of loneliness in that great desert. What could I do less than promise that Anne's brother should be there to welcome her?'

'And she replied?' asked Anne, anxiously.

'Not a word; and I was too wise to wait for one.'

'My poor Horace!' said Anne, fondly bending over him, and parting his luxuriant hair from his forehead, which she kissed; 'you have wisdom yet to learn.'

'Anne, I will not tell you how I hate you for moralizing at this moment. If you cannot treat my mind as judiciously as you did my body, I must seek another adviser.'

'Dearest, I never have advised you—only listened and told you whatever I knew; and that is all that I propose to do now.'

'What can you have to tell me half so important as that which I have told you?' Then laying aside the half-jesting tone he had hitherto employed, Horace took his sister's hand with earnestness. 'Will nothing cheer you, Anne—nothing drive the gloom, for I can call it no less, from your brow? Tell me, does this new affection, pervading my whole being, grieve you? Do you esteem my heart so narrow, that to admit her I must expel you?' he asked, reproachfully.

'My dear Horace, I have not been thinking anything about myself indeed—only how I shall discharge a very painful duty imposed on me by my uncle, which I have undertaken, believing that you would better hear from my lips than from his—'

'Expostulations will be vain; this is a point on which I have a right to decide. If he disapproves, as perhaps may be natural, he is too kind-hearted really to injure my happiness.'

'He is the most selfish creature living!' exclaimed Anne with indignation. 'But let me speak. I have much to say, and you must be calm.'

'Oh! calm and patient as possible.'

Anne began in a voice which she strove to make obedient to her own injunction.

'My uncle entered just after you had disappeared, no one knew where. He walked about making uneasy inquiries, till my aunt reproved him for being insupportably tiresome. I left the room, as I generally do when she begins that sort of thing. He

followed, and in a very ill-assured voice called to me: 'Anne, I want you. Shall you also vote it an insufferable bore to come to me for half-an-hour?' 'No, indeed, dear uncle,' I said, surprised and grieved to see him, as it seemed, so touched by what he is so used to. He led me to his room, pointed to a chair, and then walked away as if quite uncertain why he brought me there. I was uneasy about you, and my thoughts wandered, so that I observed him little, when he exclaimed with a suddenness that startled me: 'What I have to say will grieve you. I am deeply ashamed—indeed I am: some men are unlucky, and unlucky have I been for years. Maxwell is a keen fellow, and has known how to meet all my necessities—not that I mean to say he has done anything unauthorized by me, though sometimes I almost think he must. I never meant to go so far; and my Lady Countess, she may be generous to others, she has always been hard with me. But I want to speak to you of Horace. I can't bear that he, poor fellow! young, handsome, full of spirit as he is, should have to suffer by any of my past follies, nor is there the slightest occasion that he should.' This assertion at the time was a little relief to me; but, oh! Horace, I never anticipated anything half so bad. Can you believe that this estate, up to the Castle walls, is all mortgaged to that Maxwell?'

'Impossible!'

'I gathered this fact but too surely from the many incoherent words which I cannot now repeat, of which the last were certainly these: 'In fact, Duror is no more mine than it is that carter's, yonder, following the plough. And this last grand

splash—how do you think it was done, except what part the Countess bore in it?—Why, Maxwell himself supplied me with the money.' There was a recklessness in my uncle's manner, in spite of occasional touches of regret and shame, which filled me with indignation. I could not help demanding: 'To what purpose was it lavished? It was a wanton insult to my brother to call him here and declare him heir to an inheritance which had already passed out of your hands.' 'Not so hasty, Anne,' he answered; 'you do me great injustice.' 'Pardon me,' I said; 'were you then as much a stranger to these facts as we?' 'No, not quite that either. I knew them when I wrote to Switzerland; but, as I told you before, his interests I have cared for—I have consulted. In fact, they are entirely in his own hands, and you must make him see this.' 'If it be a fact, of course he will see it,' I answered; but my uncle cried: 'Nonsense! as if we did not all blind ourselves to facts every day! You must make him see and understand that this estate is his, without difficulty, without disgrace, without a reflection on our name, a breath on our honour—ay, and with means to maintain it in a princely dignity, such as has not adorned it for ages—if ever—all on one condition—' '

'What?' interrupted Horace, with vehemence.

'That you marry Judith Maxwell: this is the climax of her father's ambition; for this he stipulates to give up all his advantage over us. I was speechless at this declaration, as you are now, Horace. My uncle strove to turn my astonishment into ridicule. 'Why, of course, you must have

understood something of this sort when I urged you to take notice of her, to see that she was one of the most considered of our guests.' 'I thought,' I answered, 'that very possibly you might be in difficulties with her father; but, as I tell you again, your most unfair proceedings with regard to my brother forbade me to extend my suspicion to this length; and as to this mad expedient,—' 'Mad expedient!' he cried, angrily; 'and why mad? That girl's sense and spirit would enable her to fill any position creditably; and let me tell you, that if Horace can't make up his mind to address her like a gentleman, he will be rejected as contemptuously as if she were the first duchess in the land. I know enough of her to know that.''

'She is totally ignorant of these base designs,' exclaimed Horace.

'Oh! I never suspected her for a moment. Who could? I asked then how you could address her like a gentleman, with false professions on your lips; and my uncle, who evidently sought to lash himself into a passion, now cried: 'I suppose you mean that he is in love with the pretty face of that girl whom the Countess sent away this morning, completely tired of her, as he would be in a twelvemonth. Beauty won't do, Anne; and accomplishments and talents won't do; no, and love won't do either. No man could be more in love than I was with Adela, and see what it is come to!' And then he added, in a very significant tone: 'Let me tell you one thing,—that if he offers Beatrice Courtenay his hand, she will not accept it. Now it belongs to you to save him the mortification of being

rejected by the woman he seeks to his ruin, and thus losing all chance of winning the woman who can re-establish the honour and prosperity of his family—' '

'Oh, Anne!' said Horace, with a deep indignation, 'to what vile uses has he put the word honour in his discourse with you! But what can he know of Beatrice?'

'I cannot guess. He said it was shameful of the Countess to bring her here, and that he had only his own good-nature to thank for this additional perplexity.'

'Have you finished?' asked Horace.

'There is no more to tell.'

'Nor, it seems to me, to do. You have answered for me, Anne, perfectly well; and I will quit this place to-morrow.'

Anne would not combat this resolution, rash though it sounded. She sat in silence, her hand locked in her brother's, while, from time to time, escaped from his lips the words: 'What meanness!' 'Incredible!' 'Such utter selfishness!' Yet, on the whole, his self-command astonished her: accustomed to Horace's vivacity, she had anticipated ebullitions of much greater vehemence.

'Don't you see, Anne,' he suddenly exclaimed, 'it is but as a screen to himself that he thinks of me? I am merely the sole remaining instrument by which he can keep the estate.'

'He thinks his advice as good for you as for himself, I dare say,' returned Anne.

'It is himself, himself only, that he regards. I will not enter into his affairs—no, not one step; his

property is his own, to lose or to save. I have the slender income which has hitherto sufficed me, for, you know, with all his talking, he has never increased it.'

'And it has sufficed!' said Anne, with a deep breath of satisfaction. 'What a noble independence you have preserved!'

'Thank God, I am a free man!' replied Horace—'not the very slave that debt would make me. Were I enchained by it, how could I shake myself loose from his grasp, as now I do?' And as he spoke, he did indeed look nobly independent. With heightened colour and glistening eye, he proceeded:

'I am at liberty, while Beatrice toils generously for her grandfather, to consecrate to her, as she to him, whatever abilities nature has endowed me with. I will embrace a profession at once, and be a thousand times happier than sauntering through life in expectation of an inheritance.'

'Ah! but no such unworthy course was that which lay before you—you were incapable of following it. Oh! Horace, I cannot overcome my regret!'

Anne bent her face on her brother's shoulder.

'Yes, dearest Anne, yes,' he replied, in a voice of the utmost gentleness; 'you can—even here, in the face of this fair scene which made my heart throb with delight a few hours ago, when I thought of sharing it with Beatrice and with you—we both can still say what we learned at our mother's knee—'Thy will be done!' Oh! Anne, it cannot be that I have to teach you; yet, at the present moment, I do not find this difficult. I shall hereafter, perhaps, when I mix again with men, when I confront his

UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS LIBRARY

sordid spirit—but that danger I will not expose myself to. I will go hence at once.'

'But where, will you go?'

'Why, to London, of course!—am I to be a promise-breaker?' demanded Horace, with a smile as bright as ever.

'Then you attach no meaning to my uncle's warning?'

'None—at least, I will hear my fate, be it what it may, from her own lips only.'

'I have more to tell you concerning her. She forbid me to speak while she was amongst us; but now, I am sure you had better be in possession of the truth on every point.'

Anne repeated the Countess's unjust attempt to force Beatrice to break her faith with her grandfather, and follow out her own schemes. Lively was Horace's indignation:

'I will stay here no longer, Anne. I will leave them all to their falseness and heartlessness. My poor Anne, why must you remain?'

'Oh! never mind me; and you know I am going soon to my true friends, the Eliots, in Edinburgh. But really my present post is at my uncle's side. You position and mine, with regard to him, are quite different. It may be necessary for you to withdraw at once, but not so for me.'

The brother and sister returned slowly towards the house; and Sir Roderic, who had been sedulously on the watch, saw them.

At dinner, nothing could have been more impossible than for the different persons assembled to

penetrate the feelings of each other. Anne once observed Sir Roderic start, change colour, and then, with a desperate struggle, convey a glass of wine to his lips. She glanced at her brother, and heard the Countess, at whose hand he was seated, expressing great disapprobation of his decided announcement that he was going to quit Duror the next day. Lady St. Helens gave many signs of ill-humour after their retirement to the drawing-room. She secretly attributed Horace's intention to depart to displeasure at her treatment of Beatrice, though she did not venture to ascertain how far he was acquainted with it. As soon as the gentlemen rejoined them, Sir Roderic seated himself at his niece's side, and said, in a low voice:

'For Heaven's sake, Anne, tell me what this means? You have spoken to him; I am not mistaken in believing that?'

'I have; and my brother has taken the resolution which he considers to become him best.'

'Then he must be a madman,' replied Sir Roderic, in the same subdued tone, but kicking from him a footstool, which struck Lady St. Helens' greyhound, and set it whining, so that it excited greatly its mistress's indignation. When this disturbance had subsided, Sir Roderic's quick eye discovered that Horace was no longer present.

'Where is he now?' he inquired of Anne. 'This is intolerable. I must speak with him myself.'

'It will be vain,' replied Anne, with distress.

'Do you think I will permit him to treat me with such indignity as to depart thus?'

'Indeed, Sir Roderic,' said Anne, with spirit, 'the chief indignity was offered in your reception of him.'

Sir Roderic moved away; Anne quitted the room, and knocked lightly at Horace's door. He threw it open; she entered. The bright moonbeams fell on his face, and gave it a paleness which alarmed Anne, who did not attribute it solely to that cause. She approached him, and said:

'What I dislike is, your going away not half well; —not fit to travel.'

'I should soon be ill if I stayed here,' he answered, walking to the window, and leaning out of it. He drew in his head suddenly, and exclaimed:

'You know I can have no rest till I have seen her —and go I must.'

'My uncle is most averse—'

'I dare say he is.'

'He declares he must speak with you—'

'He shall. But our interview must be brief, and it must take place to-night.'

'Wretched man! his disquietude is so great, that I cannot but fear that your rejection of all expedients precipitates his ruin.'

At this remark, the countenance of Horace was expressive of extreme pain. At length, he observed:

'Supposing that I did not love Beatrice, would not my course be as plain and direct as now?'

'Certainly it would.'

'Then I am not urged into it by selfish passion?'

'Oh! no.'

'Then, if it be the straightforward path of duty, what can I do but proceed?'

'Nothing; but I am very sorry—'

'For one who has made wreck of honour and uprightness. Indeed, dear Anne, so am I. What is the loss of wealth, compared to the loss of confidence in one human being? and that being, one who was endeared to our childhood—'

'Ah! Horace, that is what I feel; yet he would not believe in our sorrow.'

They descended the stairs together, and met Sir Roderic, who said, impetuously:

'I was in search of you—of both. Horace, I do not understand this hasty proceeding; I would speak to you before you decide on it.'

'I have decided. We can speak together when your guests shall have retired.'

'That will be wisest, I believe,' returned Sir Roderic, whose manner vacillated between a haughty violence and a servile subjection, both alike repugnant to Horace, who felt most painfully the revolution which forced him to despise and resist one who had of late striven, by every possible means, to secure, if not reverence, at least affection.

At length the moment arrived which Sir Roderic had requested. The visitors at the Castle were gone to their several chambers, wholly unsuspicious of what was to pass between their host and his young kinsman. All were disposed to congratulate the first on the possession of so agreeable an heir, and the latter on the prospect of so fair an inheritance. Sir Roderic had found time to premeditate his address.

'Horace,' he said, with an air of candour and generosity, 'is it the conduct of one whom I have

regarded as my own son, to forsake me in the first hour of difficulty? I can well understand your disappointment, your irritation. I am a thousand times more annoyed myself than you can be. You have nothing to reproach yourself with; I, everything.'

'Sir Roderic,' said Horace, gravely, 'I must interrupt you. I am firmly determined not to enter into any discussion of your affairs; they are strictly your own, and with yourself I leave them.'

'To you, my nearest of kin—my heir, as I have declared you—I naturally look for counsel and aid in difficulties unparalleled.'

'Pray, spare me any allusion to the mockery you have put upon me; I only waited here to acquaint you with my resolution to abstain from this subject. Now, good-night.'

'Stop, Horace,' cried Sir Roderic, detaining him. 'Tell me one thing — Do you seek Beatrice Courtenay?'

Horace coloured: 'Sir,' he replied, 'you are not my father; you have ceased to be my guardian—you have forfeited my friendship. Here, too, I positively decline to hold any communication with you.'

'Headstrong boy!' exclaimed Sir Roderic, with uncontrollable passion. 'When you shall have blasted the honour of your family, and ensured its ruin, how then will avail you this indomitable pride?'

He threw himself into a chair, leaving Horace at liberty to depart; but as the young man reached the door, he turned round, and, at the sight of

his uncle's despairing attitude, relented, and came back.

'Tell me,' he said, laying his hand on the Baronet's arm, 'is there any way in which I can serve you, acting as a person entirely unconnected with your affairs?'

'None,' replied Sir Roderic, whose hopes had been excited. 'Serve yourself, and save me you can. Our interests are one.'

Horace left the room. Sir Roderic, after a gloomy period of meditation, started to his feet. 'I am a ruined man—so is he. Wilful alike, uncle and nephew. I must try to get him back his wretched pittance, if I can; if not, why he must thank himself that he is penniless.'

The next morning, Horace Lindsay quitted Duror.

CHAPTER XL.

Every day
Drew from the sickening hopes their strength away.
. . . . . quiet, love, and care,
Strove with the gloom and broke on the despair.
Then hope of holy kind the soul sustained,
And not a lingering thought of earth remained.

CRABBE.

BEATRICE, on arriving in London, was welcomed by her aunt with warm affection, and had the happiness of finding her, in voice and person, the counterpart of her grandfather.

'You are not the least like any Courtenay I ever saw,' said Mrs. Fane; 'but I shall be able to love you in spite of that.'

'I am like my mother, I believe,' replied Beatrice, timidly.

'Ah! a pretty Italian creature,' said Mrs. Fane, with admiring looks.

Beatrice was no sooner alone with Annunziata, in the little chamber prepared for them, than she threw her arms round her neck:

'Dear Annunziata, do you not recognise the very voice and smile, and kind, kind manner? Ah! with you who have come so far for me, and with her who

will remind me of my grandfather every hour of the day, I shall be able to feel as if this were home, and the desire to bring him to it will redouble my efforts.'

'I hope not. You have looked pale enough lately. I shall speak to the Zia about you.'

'Pray don't. She will not know that I am paler than usual.'

The natural consequence of Aunt Mary's resemblance to her gentle brother was, that before the close of the following day Beatrice had told her all that had passed in Scotland, except that which related to Sir Roderic's secret and her own.

'Lady St. Helens must be an unprincipled woman, my dear,' said Mrs. Fane, greatly distressed. 'I am very glad you are safe with me. But the loss of all your friends is a sad disadvantage for you, too. What can be done? I think you must call on Lady Rhoda Marlowe, as she bid you. She seems straightforward, and kind in her way. You had better go with Annun—may I call her Anna? Lady Rhoda knows her, and will be better pleased to see her than me, probably, the first time.'

'I believe you are right, aunt; but we will not decide till to-morrow comes. A night helps a decision so much.'

'You don't mean that you shall lie awake all night to consider?'

'Oh, no! I shall wake up, and know what to do.'

Morning came—a bright, cheerful morning.

'I know what you shall do, Beatrice,' said Aunt

Mary. 'Put on your bonnet, and we will walk across the Park to Lady Rhoda's house. I will leave you there, and call for you again.'

'What does this mean?' asked Lady Rhoda, the first cordial greeting bestowed. 'Lady St. Helens cannot be gone to Paris yet.'

'No. She has not even quitted Duror, I believe.'

'Then why are you here?'

Beatrice told her, not Lady St. Helens' accusations, only her commands.

'Worse than I expected. When it is quite certain that she has left you off, and that you have left her off, I will think what I can do for you; but there is nothing to be done in London at this time in the year—absolutely nothing.'

Beatrice looked disappointed. It seemed to her terrible to do nothing; ill at ease, occupation, for occupation's sake, was almost as much to be desired as the furtherance of her main object.

'I see you are vexed, but that is of no use. How do you like your aunt?'

'She is just the same as my grandfather,' said Beatrice, in a tone of extreme contentment.

Lady Rhoda was pleased with the answer.

'A really kind, simple old woman must be a rest and a comfort to you,' she replied. 'Now, as to my fine cousin, she has been from first to last just what I well know her to be—a hollow-hearted woman of fashion. Let me hear no more of gratitude and obligations; it is pure nonsense. Mr. Howard never ought to have placed a young, confiding girl with her as he did. A man of the world, he must have seen through her. He wanted to

get you to England, and he did not know how. No exculpations—no explanations. What do you think your view of the matter can signify to me? What light can you throw on it, pray? You come to me for advice, for you don't know where to turn—very sensible—and the best I can offer you shall have: never renew any connexion with Lady St. Helens. If you are in earnest about your profession, say so, and I, perhaps, can serve you in it as well as she.'

'I am quite in earnest.'

'Very well; I will consider for you how you ought to proceed. Pray, what are you thinking of now?'

'That I cannot forget how kind Lady St. Helens once was. I must believe that her affection then was as real as her anger and alienation now—more real, I should like to think.'

'That means, you like to be a simpleton, and can't be quite so great a one as you wish. Well, I believe it is partly because you are a simpleton that I love you; it is pretty enough at eighteen: but I know Lady St. Helens, and you must be content to act on my knowledge.'

'I do not expect the opportunity of acting at all. She will not let me approach her.'

'So much the better. And Mr. Lindsay, did you leave him an interesting invalid still?'

'No,' said Beatrice, struggling not to blush at the sound of Horace's name; 'he was out riding the day I came away.'

'Indeed! a rapid improvement. Now, that knock is Mrs. Fane's, I have no doubt. Let me have the

pleasure of making her acquaintance at once; it is what I desire, if she will allow it.'

Mrs. Fane met with so gracious a reception, that, in their walk home, she told Beatrice she could not imagine why Lady Rhoda Marlowe was ever thought harsh or forbidding.'

'She is not so to us, certainly,' replied Beatrice.

Shut up in the dull little drawing-room of a small house in the neighbourhood of Cavendish-square, Beatrice could not divest herself of the idea that every time a knock was heard at the door, Horace Lindsay was about to enter; but he did not appear, and after the lapse of a few days she began to believe that he was at Duror still, and at Judith's side. 'Sir Roderic has revealed all, and this is the result.'

Beatrice told herself that she ought to rejoice, and set out to keep an appointment with Lady Rhoda. She was shown into a morning-room to wait till that lady was ready for the drive which she had proposed taking. Beatrice turned to a book-case to divert her mind from tormenting thoughts, and pulled out a small volume of poems. She found on the first page of it a dedication to the Countess of St. Helens, written in language which was either highly enthusiastic or somewhat fulsome; it was signed 'Corinna.' Beatrice was surprised to find it in Lady Rhoda's possession. She turned over a few pages with some interest. 'A lady singing'—a 'lady with violet eyes and raven tresses'—was certainly Lady St. Helens. She asked herself whether, in her fondest days, she could have written strains like these, and said: 'I dare say she never believed

I loved her!' But the praise, though extreme and not very skilful in its expression, bore an air of truth and nature about it that convinced Beatrice the writer was no mere flatterer. She did not perceive that Lady Rhoda had entered, and stood surveying her at her studies.

'Come, my dear,' she cried, abruptly; 'I am ready: beg pardon, first for keeping you waiting—next for interrupting you now.'

Beatrice followed her. When seated in the carriage, Lady Rhoda asked:

'Those verses interested you, did they?'

'The subject did,' replied Beatrice.

'They are mediocre, I believe. The poetess has written better since, under the influence of feelings as strong and more wholesome.'

'But the sentiments there seem genuine.'

'They were so, I verily believe,' replied Lady Rhoda, leaning back in thought; then suddenly she turned round, and fixing her eyes on Beatrice's face, asked:

'Would you like to hear the true story of Susan Grey?'

'Very much.'

'Then I will tell it you. I need not mistrust my motive; there is a plain moral for you.

'Seven years ago, Lady St. Helens met with a girl who (she asserted) was born with a talent for poetry, just as you for music. That assertion shook my confidence in her discernment. I can perceive your genius, but I by no means thought that of Susan Grey undeniable; not to be trusted to gain her a livelihood which she required. However, the Countess

taught her to sign herself 'Corinna,' and promised that her poems should be published by subscription. I was asked to subscribe; I refused; of course; I was so narrow-minded, stiff, and cold, and not likely to be taken by a book which rang the changes in praise of Lady St. Helens. I did refuse, certainly, and the book failed. I don't remember that I was little enough to feel gratified; if I did, I would tell you so. But Susan Grey, poor thing! fell from her pedestal, and who asked where she fell to? I did, the very next season: Lady St. Helens got red, looked uncomfortable, and said Susan had gone back to her family, quite low people, and had in the winter sent her a poem which was very weak, weaker than before. Susan had mentioned that she was ill, and she had given her ten pounds, she thought. I asked for her address; that Lady St. Helens could not find. I went to her publisher; he had heard from her lately, but had declined further dealings with her; he gave me her address, and, to my surprise, it was in London. I went to the place; she had never lived there—only a friend had promised to receive her letters, to spare her the annoyance and disadvantage of naming a meaner. I found out her real abode. I was horrified at her appearance: the table was covered with needlework, and her poor fingers were stitched to the bone; but she loved her scribbling still, for there was ink upon them, I saw. Poor girl! I have a few pieces of hers written at that period, better, I think, than anything of Corinna's—the sharp cries her heart uttered. Well, don't sob. Suffice it to say, I took to her from that time, and at last took her. I saw nothing short of a pension would do, and that

was my way of pensioning her; there was no other mode of saving her from the workhouse, a dreary abode! You look horror-stricken. You can never have been inside one; you shall some day. It is good for us to know how multitudes of our fellow-creatures live—and die!'

'I should like to go anywhere among the poor with you. I am not unused to the poverty of a town. The Signora Maddalena would often let me accompany her, especially to the Hospital of the Incurables, and I was fond of the kind sisters there. My aunt is much occupied in the service of the poor around her. I loved her from the first because she was so like my grandfather, and now I begin to love her for her own sake.'

'So will I,' replied Lady Rhoda, cordially. 'We must see more of each other.'

'I wonder that you and Judith Maxwell did not become better acquainted, considering what strong links there are between you,' ventured Beatrice.

'She is too keen for me. Sweet and sour go best together.'

'Oh! how unjust if by sour you mean yourself, dear Lady Rhoda!'

'No, not very. You see just now, I have made myself mistress of a piece of sugar.'

'I don't want to be sugar,' said Beatrice; 'it is cloying and insipid.'

Lady Rhoda detained Beatrice to dine with her. When they entered from their drive, she went to her desk, drew out a private drawer, and took some papers from it, saying:

'There, these lines please me as well as any Susan

ever produced. Poor thing! It is as if she had dipped the pen that wrote them in her own heart.'

Beatrice prepared to read with much interest.

'This first,' said Lady Rhoda.

LIFE'S APOLOGY.

'Life, I still might love thee well,
Didst thou aught of gladness tell;
Could I early hopes recall,
Say: Thou didst not thwart them all.
Darling projects youth devised
By thy years were realised!
Gratitude might still endear thee,
Though thou wouldst no longer cheer me.
But not so—Each hope was blighted,
And at noon of day benighted,
I must grope through cloud and gloom,
Seeking nothing but the tomb.
Scant the solace thou hast left me,
And of how much joy bereft me.
What would say thy mournful eye?—
Make me, if thou canst, reply.'

'Seldom am I loved. In vain
Lasting sway would I maintain.
Youth's affections soon I lose,
Wise and old esteem refuse;
Me of treachery all accuse.
Yet am I thy truest friend,
And to serve thee all my end.
Through me only thou aspirest
To the heaven thou desirest,
And of sorrows thou complainest
By which glory thou attainest.
I o'erthrow thy fancies vain,
That thou lasting wealth mayst gain,
Sow with thorns thy opening path,
Sweep it with the whirlwind's wrath,

Mock thy schemes, thy goods destroy,
E'en my pleasures quickly cloy.
I seek not to win thy heart;
Thou and I must quickly part.
I lead thee to Eternity,
And to me thou soon must die.
Ask not gifts I may not give.
'Tis to die that thou dost live.'

'Now thy mission I have read,
I no more for joy will plead,
But thy path with patience tread;
Nor for life's reward will ask
Till I have discharged its task.
True, thou hast a boon of worth,
But it waits my future birth.
Thou hast given it Death to hold;
He thy virtues shall unfold.
He shall make me love thee, Life,
Though with storms and trials rife.'

Lady Rhoda brushed away a tear:
'This is later, and more subdued,' she said.

Heb. x. 34.—'*Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.*'

The spoiling of their earthly goods of old
The saints received with joy. Oh! Lord, behold
A costlier gift I to the altar bring,
To Thee, my Saviour, Comforter, and King.
The spoiling of each hope of heart and brain,
Of all fond fancy ever thought to gain,
All cherished projects, all desire cast down
In memory of Thy cross and thorny crown.
In hope of heaven I earthly hopes resign,
To but one prayer adhere: Oh! make me Thine!
In Thine own way possess Thyself of me,
And I henceforth will seek none else but Thee.

But only in Thy strength can I draw near;
Sustain my feeble hands my gift to bear.
My trembling steps 'tis Thou must guide aright,
And o'er a gloomy path must shed Thy light.
In love reveal the distant cheering view
Which my exhausted spirits shall renew.
Aimless and treasureless 'tis not Thy will
To leave Thy creatures, but to snatch from ill.
Earth's fleeting pleasures if Thou wilt withhold,
Then heaven's undying glories all unfold.
While we afar as weary pilgrims wait,
Fain would we see the abiding City's gate—
Count up our treasures in our storehouse there,
To earth's winged riches yielding little care,
A better and enduring substance won,
And joy for evermore, life's labour done!

'Ah! here is true resignation!' said Beatrice.

'She is resigned,' answered Lady Rhoda; 'not in word, but in deed—not in poetry, but in prose. Matter-of-fact sufferings are hers. But you shall see.' And she led Beatrice to a neat little chamber within her own house, the sole dwelling of Susan Gray. She was a pale, intelligent young woman; her eyes sunken, her lips livid, her whole appearance that of irremediable ill health. Her powers of reading, she told Beatrice, were now very limited: her patience was touching, her gratitude to God and her protectress fervent.

'How much better may it prove for me in my next life, in my abiding home, to have passed this portion of my existence thus, than to have been the favourite toy of a flattering world!' could Susan say, with the satisfaction of a full conviction.

The one room in which she lived was not a cheerless abode; there were several framed drawings

hanging round it, the works of Lady Rhoda's hand, who was a spirited artist. One was of Michel Angelo's 'Pietà' at Genoa, and another a copy of a very touching design of the same subject, by Raphael, to be found among the engravings of Marc Antonio. The dead body of our Lord is laid reverently on the earth whence human flesh was moulded. The Mother stands with extended arms, and eyes raised to heaven, knowing that there, in her mortal anguish, must she seek Him who animated, and will reanimate, the form which she had cherished in infancy and childhood, followed with reverential awe through the brief course of manhood, and watched beside in the death agony. In the background is an outline of Jerusalem—the city over which he wept, wherein dwelt mothers, who had been the objects of His prophetic compassion. On one side is the uncontaminated tomb in which is to be laid that pure flesh which shall not see corruption.

From these pictures of Mary in her unparalleled woe, Susan could turn her eyes to Raphael's fairest ideals of the Virgin Mother, who 'kept all those things that were spoken of Him,' her marvellous Child, in her heart, and 'pondered them' with a spirit which 'rejoiced in God her Saviour,' let what will be in store. There was Murillo's type of the Infant Jesus, looking upward with an expression of that filial obedience which appropriated to Him the words: 'Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God!' and which rendered Him 'subject unto' Joseph and Mary.

Beatrice looked at these drawings with extreme

interest—a feeling which she in turn inspired in the sick girl, who followed her with earnest eyes, and said:

'I can't help thinking I have seen your face before. I am sure Lady Rhoda has shown me a picture which resembles it.'

'There is a picture which I have been called like,' replied Beatrice.

Susan interrogated Lady Rhoda next, who smiled, and promised:

'Beatrice's likeness shall be added to your gallery.'

Before long the engraving of the Madonna della Seggiola was there.

'It is very pleasant to me to have that sweet human face looking softly into mine,' said Susan.

CHAPTER XLI.

C'est par-là que je vaux, si je vaux quelque chose.
BOILEAU.

BEATRICE had not arrived at the true explanation of Horace Lindsay's non-appearance, as she discovered when a letter came from Anne, speaking of his departure, and of the blankness of Duror, and the general preparations for abandoning it. Anne did not enter on the subject of her uncle's affairs. But where was Horace? At York, suffering too much from the effects of his imprudent ride, and no less imprudent journey, to make further progress for many days. He did not communicate even to Anne the secret of his detention; and Beatrice he dared not address by letter, for no sooner did he begin (as he did a hundred times in every twenty-four hours) to frame the most touching appeal to her, than she rose before his imagination in her ice-bound frigidity, and he felt that it would be destruction to his cause to trust it to anything short of the pleading of his own lips.

'O that I were possessed of her calmness!' he exclaimed; 'there would be some chance then of my

getting well—now I may toss here till I am in a fever.'

However, rest and such quiet as he could command restored him sufficiently to enable him to resume his journey after a week's delay.

'She must have thought more than once what could have become of me,' he said, as he drove to Mrs. Fane's house. Hearing that Miss Courtenay was out, he ventured to suppose that his name would be a sufficient introduction, and entering, found few apologies required by the kind old lady who rose to receive him. The silver hair that was smoothed on her brow softened the lines of age; her manners were singularly pleasing, and in a few minutes Horace found himself chatting with much of that friendliness which he was so desirous to establish between them.

He asked after Annunziata, hoping to see her; but Mrs. Fane told him, with a smile, that she scarcely trusted her young mistress out of her sight. 'She is her constant attendant in walking. She scarcely understands me yet, or I her, but I think we shall become friends.'

'I hope she would recognise me as such,' replied Horace; 'I have a high opinion of her. She has an excellent heart, and is devoted to Miss Courtenay. Has your niece many acquaintance in London?'

'Lady Rhoda Marlowe has received her with kindness. It is fortunate that she should be here at this season.'

Horace now took his leave, and without loss of time repaired to Lady Rhoda, who, on seeing him, inquired coldly what had brought him to town?

'Oh, want of advice, I suppose. Don't you see I am still lame?'

'I wonder you did not leave that in Scotland. It won't interest here, where none of the circumstances of the case are known. Who will care whether you did or did not pull a Highland imp out of the water? Besides, you will really get a habit of limping if you keep it up.'

'You don't mean to say you believe it to be affected? As you remark, there are none here whom it will interest; yet I hope it will revive old associations in Miss Courtenay. People have a bad way of slipping back from the pleasant intimacy of a country house when you meet them in London. You, I confess, are the same everywhere.'

'Miss Courtenay, as I understand from her, has now begun the business of life, and will have little time for idle intimacies,' observed Lady Rhoda, with severity. 'There is no one in London, absolutely no one, and I shall make arrangements for her to go into the country.'

'Then you have succeeded Lady St. Helens as her patroness? Well, she has gained one equally generous and less fickle. I suppose you know that my aunt and Miss Courtenay parted in displeasure?'

'I am perfectly well acquainted with that fact—it always occurs when Lady St. Helens takes up by mistake any one who is worth taking up.'

'You allow that Miss Courtenay possesses merit?'

'I always liked her, and you know it.'

'I thought you were rather hard upon her, considering that she is very young, and un-English on some minor points.'

'Horace Lindsay,' replied Lady Rhoda, becoming somewhat provoked, 'it is not my way to be very soft with those I think have any good in them. Diamonds are not to be polished by soft handling; and it is worth while to pick them out of the earth, and rub them well.'

'Certainly, Lady Rhoda; and I do begin to hope that you regard me with favour, for you have given me several very severe rubs.'

'I have just so much regard for you as at times (and at this time especially) induces me to hit very hard, but I am not sure that you can bear it. I do not know whether you will prove a true gem, or a bit of gaudy glass that shivers to pieces.'

'Try,' said Horace.

'The very way in which you are lounging in that easy chair provokes me. You will never do anything.'

'I will immediately seat myself on any three-legged stool there may be in the room, if that will make you share my own conviction that I shall do a great deal,' replied Horace, rousing himself to look round, and then sinking back into his former easy posture.

'I see what your ideas of exertion are,' said Lady Rhoda, contemptuously; 'and seeing this, it is necessary, and not solely for your own sake, to expostulate with you, as I am resolved to do. I have been a friend of your family in former days—a friend of better men and women than are to be numbered of it now — of your own father and mother, for example.' At these words the young man's countenance was so unaffectedly reverential, that Lady

Rhoda could not help liking him. She dropped a stitch in her knitting, was very busy in picking it up, then threw it to the other side of the table to take its chance, a very bad one, of escaping utter disorder.

'Horace Lindsay, I wish to ask you if you can consider it an honourable or wise course for you to follow this very beautiful young girl to London to continue the idle flirtation with which you amused yourself at Duror?'

'I would pronounce none more dishonourable or unwise,' replied Horace, with heightened colour; 'dishonourable towards her, most unwise for myself, for what man could promise himself that he would pursue such a game coolly?'

Lady Rhoda regarded him in silence; then she observed:

'I can only understand your speech to mean that you are not cool.'

'I never was; nor idle.'

'Oh! then you are hot-headed, mad, and mischievously busy—'

'I am exactly what I intend to be. I have counted the cost, and I shall pursue my purpose without swerving. I should have reached London long since, had not the lameness which you, Lady Rhoda, consider affected, detained me at York for a week, in pain that was not to be set at defiance.'

'Dear me, you look rather ill!' exclaimed Lady Rhoda, in a tone of affectionate alarm. She pushed a footstool toward him. 'I must have you here, and nurse you.'

'Thank you. You have reminded me that you

were the friend of my father and mother: extend just so much favour to me as to believe that I am not so wholly unworthy of them that you need regard my every word and act with suspicion. There was a time when you dealt more kindly by me. Tell me, frankly, why—when you changed?'

'Why? Because I thought you trifled with Beatrice.'

'Never!'

'When?—when I gathered from Sir Roderic's own lips that there was a prospect, particularly agreeable to him, of your re-establishing the tottering fortunes of your family by a wealthy marriage.'

'There never was nor will be such a prospect!' exclaimed Horace, indignantly; 'and as to tottering fortunes—they totter no longer, but have crumbled into dust. I will tell you in confidence, Lady Rhoda, that I have no longer the slightest expectations from my uncle.'

'Impossible! he has just declared you his heir!'

'The two facts are paradoxical—they ought never to have been coexistent. I tell you truly that Duror will not be mine; that I have nothing but the slender fortune my parents left me, unencumbered, thank Heaven, by debt; that I come to London to seek a profession.'

'And you have thrown away all your prospects for that girl's pretty face?' said Lady Rhoda, leaning back, and surveying Horace keenly.

'Certainly not. I must have done the same had I never beheld it.'

'Then, Horace,' exclaimed Lady Rhoda, with

animation, 'I really believe this will be the making of you, and you will do something after all.'

'I can very well spare condolences,' replied Horace, with a little hauteur, 'but I cannot quite understand how 'after all' applies to a man of one-and-twenty.'

'—Who, a few months ago was a conceited, lively boy, standing on the threshold of a life of idleness and folly.'

'But do you think I should have passed that threshold? I fancied that I had imbibed somewhat lofty ideas of the duties of the Laird of Duror.'

'Visionary, I dare say. What arduous duties are you going to undertake now?'

'I cannot yet tell. I must consult my friends. Shall I read for the bar?'

'You think yourself clever enough for anything.'

'For something, I do.'

'What would you say to diplomacy? The Countess has interest—'

'I shall not ask her to employ it for me: she has injured Beatrice. Moreover, her love generally goes where fortune favours. But this is not my first point—Lady Rhoda, I consider that you are my friend.'

Lady Rhoda knew his meaning very well: she paused:

'I am just at that time of life when I ought to be coolest, hardest, most prudent; and yet I am holding out my hand to a romantic young fool, and incurring the imputation of being a romantic old one. However, Horace, we will part friends: go

your way, and let me hear when you wish either my help or counsel.'

'Very strange,' she said, as the door closed on Horace, 'that the reins should be taken out of the hands of Sir Roderic and Lady St. Helens, and thus placed in mine; and that I should have to guide these two along the difficult road they have entered on! One is all fire, the other all fortitude; they will reach the top of the hill yet.'

Having come to this conclusion, the good lady, active and cheerful as she ever was in her own home, 'with her work about her,' as she said, turned with diligence to employments, which seemed more sober and matter-of-fact than the romantic episode, which it gave her infinite satisfaction to consider as in some measure entrusted to her conduct.

CHAPTER XLII.

Voyons un peu une scène d'amant et d'amante.
MOLIERE.

HORACE LINDSAY'S great point was to see Beatrice at once, and to see her alone. As he debated on the best mode of effecting this, he found himself again at Mrs. Fane's door. Annunziata opened it to him, with exclamations of joy and wonder.

'You did not know I was here?'

'No, indeed; there are no birds of the air to tell us secrets here. We have just entered.'

'I told you I was coming. I was sure of a good reception from you, Annunziata. Your young mistress—is she in?'

'Yes, returned tired—pallida come la morte. This place will kill her, and me too.'

Horace looked alarmed: 'I want to see her.'

'Do I not tell you, she is tired to death? The aunt is out. She will see nobody.'

'The face of an old friend may cheer her as well as you. Annunziata, I must see her,' cried Horace; and, passing on, he sprang up the stairs, Annunziata scolding as she followed.

He was again in the dingy little drawing-room in which Mrs. Fane had received him, but it looked brighter as he felt the assurance that Beatrice would enter it.

'I should not like her to know how alarmed I am at my own daring. I always am afraid of her.'

Beatrice appeared at the door, almost as pale as if about to faint. He hastened towards her, took her hand, and led her to a seat.

'It seems very unfeeling to force you to this exertion, when Annunziata told me you were already fatigued: and yet—'

Beatrice did not contradict him, nor did she draw away the hand which lay chill and motionless in his.

'You must have expected to see me before. Nothing but illness, severe illness, could have kept me away.'

Beatrice looked up:

'That is over now—unimportant; and you must pardon me for suffering no delay I could regulate. The anxiety of waiting—the necessity for my seeing you, consulting you, and that immediately—'

Here the surprise that came into Beatrice's face was a vast assistance to Horace, who went on more rapidly:

'Yes, the time is certainly arrived when you must decide what my future course shall be; the happiness or the misery of it depends on you.'

'Mr. Lindsay,' said Beatrice, drawing away her hand, 'I have resolved not to listen to words such as these—'

She could not command her voice to proceed; and Horace profited by her silence to exclaim:

'Why not? I cannot understand you. There was a time when you must have known that my heart was yours as well as you know it now, yet did not adopt towards me the chilling reserve of your last days at Duror. Nevertheless, tell me candidly that my words are, and ever must be, displeasing to you—that my love only awakens your aversion; and, without asking when or whence this revulsion of feeling, I promise you, you shall neither hear nor see again what causes you pain.'

He paused for her reply.

'Only answer me frankly, Beatrice. Surely, a man who offers you his whole affection—who would devote his whole life to guard and serve you—has a right to a reply direct from your own heart: that is all I ask. Tell me what your heart says now to mine.'

Still she answered not.

'You think I do not merit your regard? The unformed character of youth—an appearance of levity far beyond the reality of it—have made you withhold your confidence? You shall see with what patience I will pursue the path which leads to your esteem—impose what you will: by hope all things are to be attempted. But tell me now, if you can never love me.'

'I can only tell you,' said Beatrice, weeping, 'that I desire to be spared this language; it is injurious to you, and to me.'

'Injurious? How?'

Horace did not doubt that Beatrice had been worked on to refuse him a hearing, perhaps for his sake. Who had done this?—his uncle? This supposition seemed to explain Sir Roderic's assertion.

Yet he nothing doubted that had her own heart rejected him, she would have summoned courage to declare it. Happy in this conviction, weighing all obstacles as dust in the balance compared to indifference or dislike on her part—though even these he would probably have combated—he went on, secure against final defeat.

'Will you explain yourself? Will you, for once, treat me with the candour I implore? I know your singular reserve, and that often it has strangely perplexed me; but surely you must, for once, at such a moment as this, when the happiness of a life—perhaps of two—depends on your frankness, lay it aside. Beatrice, will you not reply?'

His increasing urgency seemed but to rivet the chains of silence faster on Beatrice's tongue. Horace, now really feeling the impatience which he had at first in part assumed, walked rapidly to and fro, then paused abruptly before her for her answer.

'I can only tell you,' at last with difficulty she pronounced, 'that I do sincerely desire that you should desist—'

Horace listened with an air of fiery pride; she went on:

'This is not—indeed it is not—a course which we ought, either of us, to pursue. I entered your family in a very different position from that which you place before me. All my time, thoughts, and powers are, ought to be consecrated to one object—'

'For a period,' observed Horace, quickly.

'Well, that period is the present,' replied Beatrice, gaining confidence and fluency as she proceeded; 'and putting aside considerations which belong to

myself, I also know that it is contrary to the interests those nearest to you would have you consult, that you should seek an alliance quite unequal to their desires, and at so early a period of life form engagements which a few years' acquaintance with the world may make you regret for yourself more deeply than any for you. Believe me, no arguments can prevail against such a view of the subject as this is.'

'As to youth,' said Horace, 'as many years of weary waiting as you may choose to assign would cure that. But, Beatrice,' he continued, entirely changing his tone, 'need I tell you, who have thought and felt deeply even in childhood, that there are moments which add more of age to heart and mind than years of less eventful time? Such hours have I passed since I saw you. I am no longer the boy who thought every vision of loveliness fancy and poetry could suggest realized when he beheld you—I am not even the young man who hailed your arrival at Duror, the inheritance of his forefathers, with a trembling hope that he might win you to assist him in every strenuous effort to fulfil the duties of his position—to bless him, and all who would look to him for love and succour. That period also is closed, and I cannot look back to it without regret; the stain of baseness is upon it—worse than the wreck of the brightest hopes—' Beatrice started, but Horace perceived that it was not with surprise. 'Let me tell you, then, what I really am. I am at an age when the law pronounces me capable of acting for myself, and when circumstances imperatively force me to do so. I stand in an isolated position; on my own exertions I must

rely. I have no inheritance beyond a slender paternal one—no endowments but those Nature gave me. This revelation has been made to me since we parted. My uncle has forfeited everything.'

'And is there no remedy for this ruin?' asked Beatrice, the crimson blood rushing to her cheek.

'None,' replied Horace, firmly. 'Now, would you have me believe that I have acted with too much presumption in offering you my hand, at such a juncture as this, with not more hesitation than I would have shown when heir of Duror? in supposing that you, unacquainted with the artificial wants and the follies of wealth, could pass them by without a thought, even though Lady St. Helens, no doubt, has often promised that coronets should lie at the feet of so much beauty? I dispute it not—the thought urges me on; now on the threshold of your career, (and may it be a bright one!) I ask you to consider whether the homage of one devoted heart will—'

'Mr. Lindsay, I cannot hear more;—it is my conviction that freedom, absolute freedom, is indispensable to your welfare at such a crisis as this, and also best suited to the discharge of my own duties.'

'The coldness of your decision,' interrupted Horace, with vehemence, 'might go far to rob me of any delightful hope that your heart does not reject me—nothing but confidence in your perfect truth sustains it—and shall sustain it, till you yourself tell me that another has kindled more warmth than I have. I must learn to be satisfied, if I can only believe myself possessed of such affection as natures calm as yours have to give.'

Horace was certainly not altogether sorry to see a flush on Beatrice's brow—a quivering of her lip, which looked very like indignation; and, bending forward, he caught an indistinct murmur of the word 'ungenerous,' when Annunziata opened the door, her patience quite exhausted by her curiosity. She announced that the Zia would return in a moment, and how much longer was the Signorino going to stay? 'Very strange manners! She would like to know whether these were English fashions?'

Beatrice made her escape. Horace lingered to tell Annunziata that she must learn to accommodate to English fashions.

'Yes, I must, I suppose; for, dismal as your country is, I must remain here for life and for death if the Padroncina does.'

'Where she dwells, you would dwell?'

'Certainly; whoever wins her shall take me.'

'So be it, Annunziata!' cried Horace, holding out his hand, and leaving her pretty well satisfied at the point where the discourse was broken off.

'Pray, did the Signorino Orazio ask you to-day to be his wife?' demanded Annunziata, boldly, at night, feeling convinced that she could not rest until she was answered; but Beatrice only said, with beseeching eyes:

'Do not tease me, dear Annunziata; pray do not. Can't you see that I am tired and ill?'

'You need not be so tired if you marry a gran signore like he is. He would fetch the grandfather home without your singing till you look like a ghost.'

'You are mistaken, Annunziata; Mr. Lindsay is not rich; on the contrary, poor.'

Annunziata stood aghast:

'Not rich! with that castle, and that lake, and those mountains—which, to be sure, have neither corn, nor wine, nor olives, nor chestnuts on them?'

'They are not his, nor ever will be.'

'Nonsense! you are cheating me,' cried Annunziata, angrily.

'Indeed I am not—all is changed now.'

'Oh! very well,' grumbled Annunziata; 'then I don't wish you to marry him, certainly. Io ti voglio ricca, ricca!'

CHAPTER XLIII.

Du mensonge toujours le vrai demeure maître.
BOILEAU.

LADY RHODA listened with imperturbable dryness to Horace's repetition of what had passed in his interview with Beatrice, and further exercised his patience by keeping him waiting for her reply. At length she said:

'I agree with you, that if she hates you from the bottom of her heart, she ought to say so.'

'I don't believe that she either hates or loves,' cried Horace.

'She is very prudent—quite free if any better offer comes, no doubt.'

'Now, Lady Rhoda—seriously speaking, do you not believe that her prudence is more romantic than another woman's romance?'

'Oh! that is your idea? Well, mine is, that the girl has behaved admirably.'

'I cannot at all agree in that opinion,' exclaimed Horace.

'No; because the good sense is wholly on her side. Cannot you perceive that your relations will think you mad if you rush on with this precipitation?

After all your silly, sentimental trifling, you owed her a plain declaration of the state of your heart. I had no idea of her being left to pine in suspense; but, as she says, this is not a time for foolish engagements. Go and seek an honest livelihood, and means to keep a wife; and let her exercise the talents God has given her, from which I am determined she shall reap a golden harvest. The less you see of each other, the better.'

'I am in the way of good advice,' replied Horace. 'Here is a note from Lady St. Helens (bidding me come to her at Mivart's), so full of indignation against my uncle, as well as compassion for me, that if I go at all, it will be as his partisan, I believe.'

'Go, by all means,' said Lady Rhoda. 'It is well to hear what she has to say. Is she starting for Paris? And where is Anne?'

'Anne is in Edinburgh—perhaps will stay the winter there. My aunt will make a few visits at grand houses, I think, before she crosses to Calais.'

Horace neither liked to refuse nor to comply with the Countess's summons: at length he yielded it obedience. Tardy as was his arrival, she rose from her sofa to meet him, held out both her hands, led him back, and placed him beside her.

'My dear Horace, this is infamous—worse than I ever expected!—I, who have long known him. He has injured you basely.'

'He is my uncle, Lady St. Helens—do not let us pursue the subject; besides, he is the chief sufferer by his imprudence.'

'Not a word in his exculpation! You are a

generous, noble creature—that makes him the more contemptible. I always hated those Maxwells from the moment I beheld them—father and daughter.'

'I never saw a woman I liked and esteemed more than Judith Maxwell,' cried Horace, indignantly.

'Lady St. Helens surveyed him with astonishment, threw herself back on her sofa with a little scornful laugh, and exclaimed:

'Dear me! then why don't you marry her? That was part of Sir Roderic's beautiful scheme.'

'Yes, and a part it would ill have become me to fulfil, even had I a heart to offer worthy of her acceptance.'

'You amaze me more and more; but, my dear Horace,' and the lady placed her hand affectionately on his arm, 'the last meaning I should like to attach to your words is that you have been caught by that artful girl.'

Horace started up as if a snake had bitten him, and walked to the other side of the room before he could hear the name of Beatrice unworthily pronounced; then, unable to restrain his anger, he returned, and addressed the Countess:

'Remember what you thought of her at Interlaken—the language you there held with me. All you then esteemed her, and far more, I esteem her now—the brightest jewel a man could win, the possession of which must elevate him above the meanness, the corruption of the world.'

'My poor Horace! this is madness—how I reproach myself with having exposed you to it! But you must be undeceived—she is a complete actress—'

'I have heard you speak of her simplicity.

Believe me, it is that very artlessness, and not the perfection of art, which perplexes, which baffles—one of your penetration.'

The Countess changed colour; she bit her lips:

'Do you mean to say that you are engaged to her?'

'No,' replied Horace, proudly; 'Miss Courtenay refuses to listen to me—agrees only too well with you as to my madness, my folly. Nevertheless, I will never resign her. Not even her own words shall turn me from her, much less those of another.'

'She refuses you, does she? She reserves her liberty—then surely you are not weak enough to lay yours down? Listen to me, Horace: I am your best friend. Come with me to Paris; my home, my purse are yours. I am bent on making you every possible compensation for your uncle's treachery. Anne told me you thought of diplomacy—I have considerable interest—'

'Thank you, Lady St. Helens; I cannot ask you to exert it in my behalf.'

'Why not?'

'Because you have injured and insulted Beatrice Courtenay; and I am acquainted with her conduct, and with yours.'

'I scorn to justify myself against the complaints of a spoilt, wilful child, who has never yet had due control,' replied the Countess, with flashing eyes. Then, after a pause, in a voice nearly choked with anger, she asked:

'And this is your decision?'

'It is.'

'Then, sir, I leave you to your folly—the dis-

tinctive features of the Lindsays—weakness combined with obstinacy. What a sad fate to be linked with them! Were I capable of wishing evil to those who have met my favours with most ingratitude, I could desire nothing worse for you or for Beatrice than you choose for yourselves. I shall think it my duty to mark my total disapprobation of your conduct. I shall not see Miss Courtenay.'

Horace had never before witnessed the ungovernable violence of the Countess: he retired, shocked, disgusted; not without thoughts of pity for Sir Roderic, and full of joy in the release of Beatrice from her sway.

He went home, and found letters written by his uncle from Boulogne, such as excited indignation almost keen enough to destroy compassion. Had the mischief inflicted by the Baronet's misconduct fallen on another instead of on himself, Horace's wrath would certainly have extinguished for the time all other sentiments.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Giudica chi di noi sia più fedele.
CINO DA PISTOJA.

E col fuggir della speranza, spero.

'PRAY do not think that you can have but one duty as regards me—always to refuse what I ask. Will you see me as soon as possible? I ought to see you, and alone.

'HORACE LINDSAY.'

This was the note which Horace penned after having read his uncle's communication with an agitation that was long in subsiding. 'Better to write thus than to attempt to see her unprepared: if she received me at all, she would place herself beside her aunt, and talk to me of Lady Rhoda. I must and will tell her all with my own lips.'

Beatrice's reply came; he tore it open—it was very short:

'I have not an hour to-day at liberty. I will see you to-morrow morning at ten, if you still think that you ought to see me.'

How little did Horace know the pain which it cost Beatrice to write these few chilling lines, the

fortitude it required to accomplish the engagements she had undertaken!

'Oh!' she said, pausing for a moment before she quitted her chamber, 'how many hours such as these are in store for me? Perhaps he will learn mercy.' It never occurred to her that any change of circumstance could really have taken place, Horace's present seemed so much a part of his former urgency.

'My dear child!' exclaimed Mrs. Fane, when, pale with a sleepless night and present agitation, Beatrice took her place beside her at her breakfast-table. She could only reply to her aunt's exclamation and her kind attentions by a faint smile of gratitude. Mrs. Fane began to feel very angry with Horace. A knock was heard.

'Mr. Lindsay is up-stairs,' said Annunziata; 'but I think I have taught him that he must not be coming here just when he likes.'

Beatrice went in silence. She had never seen Horace look as he looked now. There was no happy confidence on his brow.

'I am come to beg your forgiveness, Beatrice, to acknowledge that you were right—to unsay all that offended you—'

Touched by the distress of his voice, she held out her hand as if in token of forgiveness; but he did not take it, only went on rapidly:

'You know nothing yet. My uncle has cruelly deceived me; professing candour, he has kept back the portion of truth which most nearly concerned me. He allowed me to believe myself an independent man when he had stripped me of the slender sum which constituted that independence; and

he let me invite you to share my ruin, ignorant that it was total. He knew I sought you, and did not employ the only argument which would have kept me from you. He made me act a selfish and unmanly part. I come to bid you farewell—not to restore your freedom, for you never laid it down.'

'You have been betrayed—wronged by him who ought to have been your truest friend,' cried Beatrice. 'I knew it well, but not to this extent. Then he has barbarously robbed you of all, for his own selfish pleasure.'

The hand she again extended Horace could not refuse to take. As he clasped it in his, her tone of indignation changed to that of grief, and she burst into tears.

'These—for me!' exclaimed Horace.

'Oh! much more than these would I give!' said Beatrice, looking up, after a moment's silence, and speaking with a fervour new to Horace's ear. 'If others have not deceived me—if my own expectations do not delude me—if I am to succeed—I may live to repair, to you, to Anne, the injuries—'

'Anne's portion, thank Heaven, is safe.'

'Then,' said Beatrice, a smile of exquisite sweetness diffusing itself over her face, 'let us not despair. Independence, happiness may yet be before us.'

'Happiness—Beatrice! You know on what mine depends. Tell me it is secured; tell me that were all other confidence shaken, I might yet rely on love and truth in you. I know I may.

'Oh! Beatrice, what are you leading me to do? To-day you yield what yesterday you denied; and I accept what I came to renounce.'

'Yesterday you chose to misinterpret me cruelly. All I asked then, I require now: time to discharge my first sacred engagement.'

'To-day,' exclaimed Horace, 'the cloud of reserve —of misunderstanding—that hung between us is dispelled, and I find it impossible to regret anything that has produced an effect so delightful. I cannot describe to you the relief it is to me again to hear you speak freely: I feel as if there were no real unhappiness left.'

Beatrice shared the feeling, and expressed it by a return to the natural ingenuousness of her manner.

'As to the future,' said Horace, 'can you believe that I could ever endure, or need, that you should struggle for me? Am I to have no hopes, no ambition for myself? Are you alone to enjoy bright visions of serving those you love? I must not, indeed, return to supplicate from Lady St. Helens favours she proffered and I rejected but two days since—'

'Lady St. Helens here; and you have seen her, and she has spoken of me?'

'As I shall never hear her speak again.'

'You have quarrelled!' cried Beatrice, in a tone of extreme sorrow.

'You did not find it possible to preserve her friendship. How could I hope to do so?'

Beatrice turned away, weeping.

'If she had never seen me—'

'Neither might I, Beatrice. You cannot teach me to regret the past, linked even as it is with her.'

Lady Rhoda could not ruthlessly condemn the understanding which Horace and Beatrice had come to.

'If Horace is to turn diplomatist, and live in Courts, he cannot have a better protection against vice and folly than attachment to such a woman as Beatrice. But he must not hang about her in idleness any more, talking sentiment, for which he has rather too great a turn. I shall send her into the country, and do what I can to help his diligent search for something to employ him—at a distance, if possible.'

Horace had a bosom friend, Algernon Rose, the best friend in the world; ten years his senior, yet not too prudent to be generous, nor too self-interested to enter into the affairs of others. The enthusiasm of Horace always amused him, and it was wonderful what exertions he would make to gratify any whim which was the reigning one. At first he was disposed to regard Horace's love in this light.

'Have you made up your mind to this act of folly?' he asked, having listened with patience to all Horace had to say on the subject of never marrying any woman but Beatrice Courtenay.

'Quite,' replied Horace, with becoming haughtiness; 'the wisest resolution of my life.'

'Of your life! You were twenty-one last month, I believe.'

'Yes; since which I have become a ruined man; I am hungry for work—prepared to emulate your own industry, Rose, and have the support of the acquiescence of my truest, wisest friend in my views —my sister—'

'Miss Lindsay!—that alters the case, I allow,' said Algernon, whose tone changed when he spoke of Anne. 'She knows this lady?'

'And appreciates her. You may know her too.'

Horace did not usually love to speak Beatrice's praises, nor to hear them spoken; from other lips than those of Anne, the sound was prone to bring on a state of indescribable nervous irritation. At times he had wished, with all his heart, not exactly that she were possessed neither of her beauty nor her song; but that, by some magic process, the one were invisible, the other inaudible, to all but himself. Universal acknowledgment of her merit could not strengthen his love, nor increase his desire to win her; he had none of that sort of vanity. Those qualities of heart and mind, those thoughts and feelings which he instinctively perceived her to possess, and with infinite trouble drew forth, in spite of her natural timidity and habitual reserve, he jealously treasured as links between him and her that attached neither to any other human being. But he was desirous that his friend should see and know her, saying:

'You cannot but reverence my choice.'

Algernon acknowledged her beauty, and supposed that, as Lady Rhoda and Anne pronounced it, there must be something in her. 'But she is so beautiful, that one feels obliged, by the dictates of common sense, to expect no more.'

'What an unworthy idea! If you were better acquainted with the history of her native land, you would know that the most gifted of Italy's sons and daughters have been as liberally endowed as Beatrice

—not with one beauty, one talent, one excellence, but with all.'

'Your allusion to Italy,' replied Rose, 'reminds me that my friend Lord —— is going to Florence, as minister for Tuscany, after Christmas. I shall see what he can do for you. You know something of Italian, I believe—have all Miss Courtenay's songs by heart, at least.'

Algernon Rose held a high public office, and he did not doubt but that he should be able to forward his friend's wishes: however, nothing offered for the present more favourable than Lord ——'s proposal to make Horace his private secretary, holding out the prospect of something more advantageous as the next step. Horace set to work with diligence to make himself worthy of the employment he sought; he disdained to accept an office he could not efficiently fill.

'It amuses me to see you,' said Lady Rhoda. 'No cabinet minister would look so affairé.'

'I really do work very hard. You cannot forbid me to come to Beatrice for a few lessons in Italian.'

'To Annunziata, if you please. She has many idle hours.'

'I must not learn her patois.'

'Beatrice is going out of town, to stay with my friend Mrs. Clare and her daughter at Maplehurst. She can do nothing here till after Easter. I have taken the best advice on that subject. Such a coup-d'état I have in my mind! Meantime, she is better anywhere than here; and she may teach Eva to sing—if she can.'

Lady Rhoda perceived that by this arrangement she was rendering Horace a service which he requited with ingratitude; but her resolution was not to be shaken, nor would Beatrice be taught to rebel.

At this time, Beatrice had no greater comfort and support than Anne's letters of warm affection. 'Your conduct has throughout been most generous, most regardful of others—least so of yourself; my chosen friend, and now my sister.' Anne had a proposal to make which she thought would promote the happiness of her brother, and certainly her own. 'Let your home be mine, dearest Horace. We will put our slender portions together; and I promise you, if I manage the finances, that you shall live en prince in Florence. I have experience, you know, beyond your own, in foreign parts; and I shall not tire of hearing you talk of Beatrice. Oh! it will be a pleasant life—for me; and to you, as endurable as you will choose to acknowledge any can be that separates you from her. You will become acquainted with those who cherished her youth, with the grandfather to whom she consecrates it.'

Horace cordially welcomed his sister's offer, and delight sparkled in Beatrice's eyes when she heard it.

'Not such a bad plan, either,' said Lady Rhoda, candidly, though she usually viewed with most favour plans of her own devising. 'A good, sensible companion, like Anne, cannot but make you happier and better than you would be without her. As you have persecuted Beatrice into caring for you, I wish you to prove constant, for she has a silent

tenacity of purpose and of feeling that convinces me she never will be of two minds on any subject.'

'You have not strong convictions with regard to my constancy?'

'I don't know that I have. I say nothing.'

'And I—I shall certainly make no professions,' cried Horace.

'Not the less to be trusted for that,' thought Lady Rhoda.

CHAPTER XLV.

My Aladdin's lamp is out, and I alone.
THOUGHTS IN PAST YEARS.

'HOW very little any of these people have cared for me!' thought Judith; 'how little interest have they shown! Scarce one wished me good-bye as if ever likely to think of me again. And yet, though I am aware that they disregarded me, I cannot help feeling dull without them. They were agreeable, most of them, unlike any other society I have mixed in before; remarkable in themselves, I should suppose, for Miss Evelyn thought them so, and what is new to me is not new to her.

'I must shake off this lassitude. As I am not in love, it will be possible to rid myself of it before long. I shall not betray its existence to any but Miss Evelyn; others might misunderstand it. My father—I fear I have lost ground with him this month by my frequent absence. It was not altogether with my own will. He drove me to the Castle; he would not hear of my staying away. I confess that I did not always go unreluctantly. I did not wish to go so often; but once or twice I am conscious that I justified my going by his command

when I could not have justified it without, and was glad of the justification. But now, if diminished confidence—if a building-up again of that wall of reserve which I trusted I had for ever thrown down, be the price I have to pay for what has proved not much more than mere diversion, oh! how shall I grudge it! What must I do to regain my old corner in his heart? There is a sternness about him sometimes which frightens me. I will not be frightened; I know it does not do to quail before him. He likes those who confront him, as I will do with perfect truth and openness for my arms. His keen eye may look through and through me, if it will.

'Sometimes I fear, I know not what—he has seemed so terribly anxious and excited when he has returned from the Castle of late, especially after he found Mr. Lindsay gone. Well, now all are departed; it is passed—a dream.—I shall keep my father waiting for his coffee—that will not do.' And Judith ran down stairs.

Maxwell made his appearance with his hand full of papers, which, as he read, he cast on the floor. He was more than usually silent; but there was a deep glow of exultation on his cheek, a crimson spot—his eye looked the brighter for it; his lip was compressed. At last he pushed the cup and plate from him, paused a moment, rose, walked to the window—looked out on the Castle, dim, and shrouded, as it were, in autumn mist, invested with a grandeur beyond that it commonly possessed.

'Judith!' he said.

She was at his side. He took both her hands in his; his whole face beamed with triumph:

'Judith,' he repeated, 'you shall be mistress of all you see.'

'Never, father!' cried Judith, blushing over neck and brow. She could not meet her father's exulting eye: overcome by she knew not what emotions, she bent down her head, and hid her face on his shoulder.

'You shall,' he said, between half-closed teeth. 'That unprincipled fool, Sir Roderic, has lost all; that empty-headed coxcomb, Horace, has failed to retrieve his ruin—'

'Father!' exclaimed Judith, raising her head, and stepping back some paces, pale as before she was crimson; 'what can you mean?'

'What I say—Duror is ours.'

'Ours!—how?'

'By justice. Sir Roderic has squandered all—robbed his own nephew; the estate is mine—'

'Oh! father,' said Judith; and she turned away, covered her face with her hands, and sobbed.

Maxwell took two turns in the room, and stopped short before her:

'Girl, look me in the face, and tell me why you weep?'

Judith moved not.

'You thought'—he pointed passionately to the heap of letters—'that boy had asked your hand.'

Judith raised her head, looked him full in the face, and said: 'I did.' She paused: 'For one moment I did; it was a moment's mere folly, in forgetfulness of a fact I have known long since. He has no heart to offer, and I am fully convinced that he is too honourable, too generous, to

offer a hand without.—But my tears did not flow for this.'

'Why, then?'

Judith's dark eyes grew mournful as they returned her father's gaze. She came close to him, took his hand, and said:

'Father, you know how I love you. Tell me, is this, can this be honourably yours? That is the first question I would have satisfied, for it concerns you—of them hereafter.'

She looked up with an expression of intense anxiety. Her father drew his hand impatiently away.

'Could anything be mine that the law did not give me?'

'The law—the law—' repeated Judith.

'Judith!' said her father, sternly. 'You talk of love; do not forget respect.'

Judith turned away, slowly. She fixed her eyes on the objects to which Maxwell had directed them, and said, with a sad deliberation:

'It were vain to tell me not to grieve for those who were so recently among us, and now have lost what you have won.'

A lightning flash broke from Maxwell's eyes, but Judith could not unsay her words. He began to gather up his papers—she came to his assistance—he took them in silence from her hand, and quitted the room. Judith lingered within his call; she went out on the terrace, where he could see her from his window. Bevis, bounding towards her, suspended his joyful caresses when he perceived that

his mistress was unhappy, and asked, as plainly as words could have expressed it: 'Can I not serve you?'

'No, no, Bevis,' answered Judith; 'you can do nothing here but lend me your silent sympathy; that is much more than I can claim elsewhere. To you, my dumb friend, I may speak what I dare utter to no other.' Her tears fell fast on the forehead of the noble hound.

She heard her father throw open his window, and pronounce her name. She hastened towards him.

'I go this afternoon to Edinburgh.'

'I will be ready,' she answered, quickly.

'I shall not take you with me.' Then, as if feeling his manner to be unnecessarily repulsive, he added: 'I shall be much engaged, and quite uncertain as to my stay. You are better here.'

'Am I, father?' returned Judith. She entered the house, and busied herself in preparations for him, which, however, while they occupied her hands, could not absorb her mind.

'What will this journey bring forth? What is he about to do?—I dare not ask. Oh! Heaven protect him from all temptations! from the allurements of wealth or ambition!'

Her father read the language of her countenance as he took leave of her; but his own was stony, not a muscle of it relaxed. The sound of his carriage-wheels died away. Judith cast herself down on a seat with a gesture of despair.

'Don't grieve, my bairn,' said Janet. 'To be sure, the master does look terribly ill, and ought to

have you and me to take care of him; but a wilful man must have his way.'

'Do you think he looks so ill?' cried Judith, starting up.

Janet seemed surprised.

'Don't you?—if not, why are you so troubled?'

'Do you think him changed of late?'

Janet shook her head. Judith thought:

'How injurious must this excitement be for him! and his calmness—his sternness—it is all put on. I must treat him with the utmost caution and consideration. O that I were with him!'

The period of her father's absence Judith would willingly have passed in desponding solitude. She felt that utter prostration of strength, that total distaste for the slightest exertion, which overtake active people from time to time—surprising, vexing them, causing self-reproach.

'This terrible dread is like a poison running through my veins, and paralysing my powers. What a different character past, present, and future, assume under its influence! All my exertions for the peasantry on the domain—all my father's encouragement, and the countenance he lent me, seem now rather like a treasonable courting of popularity than Christian benevolence. Those who courted and respected us will learn to doubt whether there was any truth in us. I cannot any way reconcile myself to the past, nor summon up resolution to face the future. To induce my father to look on things with my eyes—what a vain attempt! If he could do so, he had never advanced so far. What can have been the motive for dealing so falsely with Mr. Lindsay,

if such a quick ruin were to overtake him? How I wish I could learn the truth! The plainer my disapprobation, the more will my father withdraw all confidence from me; and to whom else can I turn for information?'

In this suspense, Judith felt disposed to shun every eye, and she allowed a longer period to elapse than usual between her visits to Miss Evelyn; but affection forbade her to neglect her friend, and prudence cautioned her not to be the first to awaken suspicion by any strangeness of behaviour. Still, all her circumspection could not conceal the change in her spirits. Delicacy and good sense forbade Miss Evelyn to remark on it; but when Judith departed, she speculated on the cause in private, and could not but believe that her dejection was more than the natural reaction and flagging of the spirits when extraordinary excitement is over. She was also convinced that Judith could not mention Horace Lindsay without considerable pain. She was very sorry, and when next she saw Judith, kind beyond all former kindness: she availed herself of her help in many ways in which she had dispensed with it hitherto, assigned her numberless small tasks, and strove to call her out of her own thoughts. Judith could not refuse to exert herself for her friend; with her characteristic quickness of perception, she discerned the secret spring of this mode of action, and this detection of error did more to rouse her than anything else could have done.

'Ah!' she exclaimed, 'here is a false conclusion which I may set right—an imputation I need not labour under. She shall not pity and soothe and

humour me as a love-sick maiden, for that I am not; never was I better able to repel the charge. Since all these changes, I have ascertained precisely the nature of my own feelings. I like Mr. Lindsay cordially; his injury moves my indignation. I pity him for the disappointments, the mortifications so unjustly awarded him. He is a hero of romance, too —could not be better; and yet he is not mine. No; I have fully recognised that he and Beatrice were born for each other—not he for me, nor I for him.'

It gave Miss Evelyn pleasure to see Judith with brighter eyes than since her father's departure.

'You have had good news this morning.'

'No, none at all. Why do you think so?'

'Your looks promise them.'

'I am come to tell you some news, certainly,' replied Judith, with a smile; 'but they ought not to be news, nor did I ever suspect they could be till I was walking home yesterday evening.'

'You make me very curious. Curiosity, you know, is my foible.'

'Oh, yes, I know it; but I don't reckon it a foible in you: there is always some kind, good motive as its spring. I wish you to be very inquisitive now. We are slack of entertainment here—all those fine people who talked and sang and dressed for our amusement being gone. I do not like to tell you at once what, by judicious management and delicate misunderstandings, might last for a month.'

'But excitement and suspense are not good for me, Judith; remember that.'

'Do you really think your health would sink under them? My secret is not worth the cost; but it is

one that must be whispered in your ear. I cannot sit here and speak it aloud.'

She came round to Miss Evelyn's side, placed her mouth playfully at her ear, and whispered, with perfect distinctness:

'I am quite able to conjugate negatively every tense of the verb to be in love. You consider a certain person far too charming for me to have walked with, talked with, laughed with, counselled with, unharmed. I am perfectly heart-whole—should like nothing better than to dance at the wedding of the fair Beatrice and Horace Lindsay. She made me love her cordially her last day: I told you so. I told you, too, that they loved each other long ago; and yet you have been forgetting that, and pitying me! How could you fall into such errors? Are you convinced of them now?'

'Let me see your face, Judith, and I will answer you.'

'Very well; but, of course, I must blush. Don't misinterpret that.'

'No, I see—there is no deception here. You have made me very comfortable.'

'But you never ought to have been otherwise. You must have thought me very poor-spirited!'

'No; only young and imaginative, and not altogether fairly treated.'

'Perfectly so, by Mr. Lindsay, at all times,' interrupted Judith, warmly.

Miss Evelyn smiled:

'My own generous Judith! and altogether yourself again, as I hoped to see you.'

'Nay,' said Judith, turning away; 'here my

candour ceases. As far as I am alone concerned, it is complete; but beyond that I cannot go, nor would you have me. Only continue, my dear friend, in your own wise way—cheering me, employing me, instructing me. When I am with you, I feel the gnawing here less.' She put her hand on her heart, then forced a smile to mitigate the pain with which Miss Evelyn heard her.

'My words are wild and selfish,' she added; 'but they have done me good, and therefore you will forgive them.'

That evening, Judith had occasion to go up to the Castle; the servant left in charge of it produced a letter from Maxwell, desiring that the packing of the furniture should not be commenced, as the Countess had ordered, but that everything should remain exactly in the state in which it had been left. The next morning, she heard herself from her father; but he scarcely did more than notice an invitation she had mentioned to him as sent to her in his absence, which he desired her to accept. Judith was loth enough to comply, but never thought of resisting the injunction.

'I must see Miss Evelyn, and depart to-morrow,' she said. She was not slow to perceive a change in her friend's manner, since she last left her relieved and amused. She inquired after her health, she introduced one topic after another, and each fell lifeless to the ground. Presently she rose, and, pausing before she embraced her, asked, in a faltering voice:

'Tell me, have you heard anything?'

Miss Evelyn hesitated. Judith's hands were clasped in earnestness.

'Yes—a very strange thing,' she replied.

'Truth is strange—stranger than fiction,' said Judith, the forcible sentence flashing across her memory. Then, in a voice that almost broke into weeping, she cried:

'I feel as if I should never know a happy day again. O that I might hide my head!'

'My dearest child!' exclaimed Miss Evelyn, raising herself and extending her hand.

'Don't touch me—don't stop me—I must go now,' cried Judith, and she was gone.

Outside the cottage-door she burst into bitter tears.

'I brought him here to introduce him to Miss Evelyn; and here we walked together to meet my father and Sir Roderic on the upper farm. We spoke of all the improvements he was to make; I employed every effort to draw forth the innate worth I perceived in him; he seemed to me—nay, he was capable of recognising, of discharging the high duties I at least set before him. And now, what must he think of us! What a bitter, shameful disappointment of his expectations! What a mockery were those rejoicings! I smiled then, and little knew how I should have to weep!'

CHAPTER XLVI.

A time will come with feeling fraught.
LADY OF THE LAKE.

'I AM not going to a second Duror Castle,' thought Judith, with some satisfaction, as she seated herself in the boat ready to convey her to the steamer, for her visit was in another county. 'No Fata Morgana will be there to delight or to deceive. Good humdrum people to meet me, I dare say. As to the Fergusons themselves, I know little of them: one of the girls seems clever; I like her and her sister pretty well, and their brother not at all. I don't know why they ask me—a piece of civility never bestowed till they met me this year at the Castle.'

And bestowed now on purpose that the sandy-haired brother Judith dismissed with disapprobation might have an opportunity of seeking the favour of a young lady, whom it was shrewdly suspected would turn out to be a great heiress. Judith, with becoming scorn, rejected the various little attentions which were meant to prevail, and on the second day wished herself at home with all her heart. But Maxwell held out a sort of prospect of joining her,

and some additions were expected to the party, which promised to be agreeable—a family of Seymours, English tourists, and Colonel Guildford, an Anglo-Indian officer.

'Papa met him in Edinburgh,' said Rosa Ferguson, 'and pronounces him a most delightful person, full of general information, and manly and sensible. The Seymours, too, are charming. We promised them that if they would come to us, we would take them everywhere and show them everything. But it is too late in the year for Staffa.'

'That is a pity,' said Kitty. 'We must make it pleasant. They give such nice balls in London,—I do so want to get to them!'

Rosa looked not a little displeased by her duller sister's unnecessary frankness.

The society which Judith had met at Duror, and Miss Evelyn, had disposed her favourably towards English people, and she dressed for dinner with more expectation of being pleased than she had felt before. Colonel Guildford was placed at her side, and she soon began to think Rosa Ferguson's version of her father's opinion of him likely to be a just one. He was a man of scarce thirty-five, with a handsome, sunburnt face, and a fine figure. His voice was peculiarly agreeable, expressive of kindly, ready interest in others. He had the talent not only of being agreeable himself, but of rendering every one else more so than they would have been without his presence. There was not the slightest display in his conversation, and his fund of anecdote was easily drawn forth. Judith, somewhat accustomed to take the lead and to amuse, now felt very well content to

follow, and to be not only amused, but interested. Yet she was not thrown into the background; she filled a sufficiently prominent part to lead Mrs. Seymour to ask who she was, and to address her after dinner. In fact, she wanted to ask her some questions about Duror, for she knew the Countess of St. Helens, and had heard of her festivities there. Judith suddenly became aware that this was a subject on which she could no longer speak without embarrassment; at least, certainly not in the presence of any but absolute strangers; and the Fergusons were listening to all she said. Rosa's remarks, however, helped her through her difficulties. The opera was discussed—the ball—even the coming of age. Judith began to long to glean some tidings of the Lindsays at present. Those who spoke of them so unsuspectingly might communicate intelligence she earnestly desired; but she only heard Mr. Lindsay called a delightful creature, and Anne a kind soul, and Lady St. Helens the most gifted being in the world, and Sir Roderic so good-natured that every one must love him. She could get no further, and felt her miserable sensations returning. She removed to a distance; and the gentlemen entering, Colonel Guildford suddenly dropped into a seat beside her, and said:

'Miss Maxwell, I want to talk to you about Duror.'

She started; it seemed as if there existed a sort of persecution from which she was not to escape.

'I think you must know a cousin of mine—Sybil Evelyn?'

A bright smile broke over Judith's face at this unexpected relief.

'To see her,' continued Colonel Guildford, 'has been my great inducement to come to Scotland. Does she not live at Duror?'

'She does—she has for years, and we will never forgive you if you attempt to steal her away.'

'Dear Sybil, as beloved here as everywhere! I see I am on the right track. I have not known her since I was sixteen.'

'And her nephews—Cecil, Eugene?' asked Judith, with interest.

'They were of my own age. Do you think she will dislike to see one who takes her back to those days?'

'Oh, no,' replied Judith; 'there is no person who loses the past so little as she does—life is so completely a whole to her, and the dead almost less remote than the absent. She will welcome you the more for the link that unites you to them.'

'I have often thought that I owe more to my intercourse with her, brief as it was, than to any other circumstance of my life,' said Colonel Guildford.

'I am sure I do,' said Judith, earnestly.

Colonel Guildford looked surprised:

'Will you explain those words to me?'

'Yes, if you will yours to me,' replied Judith, with a smile. 'There is as much to interest in those of the one as of the other.'

Judith heard the account of Cecil and Evelyn, of their early education, and the share which Guildford had received in it for a few months before he quitted England. She, in turn, told the circumstances of

Miss Evelyn's residence at Duror, and the especial profit and pleasure it had been to her. She was herself again, happier and brighter than she had been since she left home. She listened with delight, while Colonel Guildford compared Sybil to everything he had known of rarest excellence. He told Judith stories of the great and good in Eastern lands, for his memory seemed peculiarly retentive of everything capable of inspiring veneration. He related some of the most affecting incidents in the life of Alia Bye, some of the noblest traits of her character. Judith's eyes glistened, and she exclaimed:

'Would not Miss Evelyn have been just such a princess?' Judith retired, conscious that she had never passed an evening so agreeably before.

'How well Miss Maxwell and Colonel Guildford got on together!' said Kitty. 'I do not believe that Allan has much chance now.'

'He had none at all before Colonel Guildford arrived,' answered Rosa. 'It was very awkward, was it not, for Judith, that Mrs. Seymour inquired so much about the Lindsays, when everybody knows that her father is doing all he can to get their estate?'

When Colonel Guildford the next day repeated to Judith his desire to visit Duror, impelled by she scarcely knew what motive, she asked him if he was acquainted with the Lindsays. She felt her voice tremble, and she was relieved when he answered, 'No.'

It would be difficult to decide whether it was zeal for Allan, or love of mischief which made Rosa, who,

talking little herself, heard most things that most people said, seek occasion to speak to Colonel Guildford about Horace Lindsay, 'the observed of all observers,' she said, in these parts. Miss Maxwell was the agent's daughter, and she was at the Castle during all these grand doings, which pleased her father, no doubt; only it was odd, rather, that she never appeared at the ball.

Colonel Guildford felt that Rosa was disagreeable to him, and always seemed to find his place naturally at Judith's side in the various walks and rides planned for showing the Seymours the country; nor did it seem extraordinary that he decided to go to Duror the day that Judith should return, and offered her his escort on board the steamer. It was settled now that her father would not meet her, and she wished to arrive at home the day before he came from Edinburgh: her movements were ruled by his letters, which were few and brief.

On one of the loveliest of autumn days did she proceed homewards, through the singular and beautiful scenery of the western coast, which never gave her more pleasure than now when she saw its effect on a stranger, who had no dear associations to bind him to it, and who was acquainted with so many of the most celebrated parts of the world.

'You can admire bonnie Scotland, I see!' she cried, in a tone that was grateful as well as triumphant, and very pleasant in its youth and frankness to Guildford's ear.

'So much,' he answered, 'that were more of the labour of life completed, I could envy Sybil the privilege of spending her days here; but though you

may think me old, I consider myself young, with 'much to do and much to be undone,' and not a thought for peace or rest yet.'

'Old!' repeated Judith to herself; 'he is a man, and I begin to perceive that Horace Lindsay was a boy—his opinions to be formed, his modes of action to be resolved on: this is a man proved like his sword.'

She sighed, and thought that Horace's time of trial had arrived; she had full confidence that he would be found worthy. She saw him before her, struggling with the sense of injury, and the generosity which would forbid him to resent the injustice by which he himself suffered. She remembered two lines she loved; and applied to him, they seemed even better than spoken, as they were, of a woman.

> 'He had a scorn of vice, and pity, too,
> For those who did what he disdained to do.'

'And he will believe me deserving of his scorn! If I could see him again, and clear myself for once! He will remember that my looks, my words, were frank—he will believe that my doings were double. He will be perplexed, warped in heart and mind by such an error.'

Then Judith remembered that there could be no justification for her that would not inculpate her father; and the desire to attempt it died down, leaving her spirit bruised, her heart faint, as she resigned herself to her situation.

This lovely day was to her so like a last day of happiness—she so much dreaded the tidings her father might bring, that the anticipation of the

future imparted a mournfulness, the delight of the present a sweetness to voice, countenance, and manner, which bestowed charms on them beyond what they commonly possessed. Judith had never appeared to greater advantage.

'Will you not accompany me to Miss Evelyn's cottage?—she is now much more familiar with you than with me,' said Guildford, as they came within sight of Duror.

'Are you sure you would like it?' asked Judith.

'Quite.'

'I am anxious to see how she is. To-morrow my father returns, and I may not be able to visit her: besides, by that time you will be old friends again, and will not want me.'

'I fear that I shall find her very suffering!'

'You will, indeed. Great is the mystery of her existence; but she has learned acquiescence, and would teach it to all who love her.'

This theme engaged their discourse till it was time to enter the boat which was to bear them to the shore. Judith pointed out the extreme beauty of the water; the sandy bed of the lake was white, and the light and shade ran along the edge in long streams of green, as vivid as malachite, and as red as porphyry.

'See what a pavement we have!' cried Judith. 'I never saw any so beautiful, except round the Island of Iona.'

As Judith landed, her own people were on the shore to give her a warm and noisy Gaelic welcome: she begged them to transfer a portion of their attention to the stranger who accompanied her, and who was a relation of Miss Evelyn. This, as well as

his own manly bearing, recommended him to favour: sending off his possessions to the village inn, he took the path to the Cottage with Judith. The garden was still bright with autumn flowers; and Miss Evelyn was lingering in the window to watch the sun go down, and saw their approach with no small surprise. Judith and the handsome military-looking stranger at her side came forward as if alike sure of welcome. After her first warm greeting of affection, Judith said:

'Here is a gentleman, dear Miss Evelyn, whom I have ventured to bring with me, because I found that he was attracted to Duror by the fame of our wondrous Sybil. He has made a pilgrimage to the North on purpose to consult her.'

'You will perceive by my sun-burnt skin how far I have travelled for the privilege,' said Guildford, smiling,—'the privilege, that is, of claiming Sybil Evelyn's remembrance of her cousin, Arthur Guildford.'

'Is it possible!' exclaimed Miss Evelyn, with pleasure. 'And you have found me out!—and taken the trouble to come to me! How very glad I am to see you! It is eighteen years since we parted. No wonder I should not recognise the fair, fresh-coloured boy I put on board the *Arethusa*, in the tall, commanding-looking personage before me—'

'I should have known you. And the kindness then overflowing is not run dry yet; your welcome has a tone which reminds me of your farewell.'

'Thank Judith for that!—it is intercourse with young, fresh hearts like hers, that saves one from becoming a well without water.—But you have

some little time to spare me. The accommodation of this cottage, nutshell as it looks, is not so limited but that I have a corner for you.'

'No, no; I will be your neighbour, not your guest. I shall have breakfasted and scaled the mountains before you will be in the least disposed to have a chat with me.'

Now came the explanation of the acquaintance between Judith and Guildford: neither he nor Miss Evelyn made her feel herself de trop, but, on the contrary, they detained her until she declared that Janet would be incensed.

As she bent her way homewards, Miss Evelyn's tone of welcome sounded pleasantly in her ears. 'I am sure she likes him; and his grateful remembrance of her through a long period of active life, his lively appreciation of her in early youth—these speak plainly for his worth.'

CHAPTER XLVII.

Of what ensued
Within the heart no outward sign appeared,
Till a betraying sickliness was seen
To tinge his cheek, and through his frame it crept
With slow mutation unconcealable.

WORDSWORTH.

THE next day Judith went down to the beach to receive her father. He arrived looking very ill, yet half rejected her proffered arm; but the respectful tenderness of his daughter's manner soothed his irritation, and he leant on her as he mounted the ascent.

At night Judith lit his candle, and placed it beside him; he took her hand, and spoke evidently with difficulty. 'Judith, I am Laird of Duror. I mean to remove to the Castle.' He felt the twitching of her hand: 'I trust I shall not find a less dutiful daughter there than I have here.'

Judith remained for a minute silent, then stooped down and kissed her father's forehead; a tear fell from her eye: 'God grant that I may be your dutiful child in all things—that I may know, and knowing, may fulfil my duty!' She looked upwards, for her words were those of prayer. Had her father

anticipated reproach, resistance?—he scarcely knew; but he had armed himself, and now he was disarmed, and he bowed his head, and sank into tears like those of second childhood. Judith was inexpressibly pained; she found this far worse to endure than any severity.

'God bless you, my girl!' said Maxwell; 'you have been—you are my chief blessing. All I do is done for you!'

'What have you done? nothing base, nothing dishonourable for me?' flashed through Judith's mind, but she did not utter the challenge. She put a bridle on her lips, and trembled under her self-imposed constraint; she turned to go.

'And no thanks, no thanks for me?' asked her father, querulously.

'I cannot thank, unless I know distinctly for what,' she replied.

'And worn and weary as I am, you would cross-examine me?' All his stern dignity was gone.

'No, father,' replied Judith, full of pity as she looked on him. 'Let me help you to your room; and may you sleep with the calm resolve that in the morning you will deal plainly with your child, as you used to do.'

A strange smile flickered over Maxwell's face at these words. When had he ever dealt plainly with any human being? And this was a thought which flattered that miserable cunning which was gradually superseding the strong intellect of his unimpaired manhood. Judith's blood ran cold with undefined apprehensions.

'Pray go to rest,' she said, imploringly.

'I will,' he replied, in a tone of exhaustion.

In the morning, Maxwell recurred, with a painful excitement of manner, to his desired removal to the Castle; in which he designed to commenceno repairs or alterations before the spring, he said. He showed a fretful impatience to accomplish his wish; and, warned by Arnold not to oppose him, Judith, in disregard of her own feelings, afforded him all the facility she could. Thus occupied, she saw nothing of her friends at the Cottage, though many a thought escaped to them, more especially when at night she laid down her head, with tears, on her pillow, for the first time as the mistress, not the guest, at Duror. The next day, her father was so ill that she quitted neither him nor the Castle. Arnold he refused to see; and the utmost she could gain from him was, to retire early to his chamber. Thither she followed as soon as she thought she might do so without irritating him by over-anxiety: he seemed quiet, and she placed herself beside his fire without speaking, and fell into musings which caused some abstraction, and it was near midnight when she was startled from it by her father moving restlessly in his bed. She rose to approach him; and no sooner was he aware of her presence, than he exclaimed:

'This is not the Castle?'

'Yes, father, indeed it is.'

'Then why have you put me in the worst room it has? Why am I to be insulted in my own house?'

'Indeed, dear father, I chose the one I thought would suit you best; it is airy, it looks on the sea,

and there is a door opening into another room which is prepared for me.'

He lay still for a while, and then said:

'Judith.'

She came to his side, and, obeying his motion, knelt down and put her ear to his lips.

'Why does Donaldson persecute me with these constant messages? I will not see him.' He pronounced each of these last words emphatically. 'There—you have my answer. Make him understand it.'

'I will, if he comes; but I have received no messages.'

'Child, you contradict me in everything. You would make me believe I am out of my senses. I tell you again and again, this is not the Castle.'

'Dear father,' said Judith, the tears running down her cheeks, 'I can easily believe you are not so comfortable here as we were in our own house. I am not. Shall we return there?—I am sure,' she murmured to herself, 'it would quiet him.'

'No, no; if this be the Castle, in it I must stay. Has it not been my ambition for years to be its laird? and shall I now, like a coward, be scared out of it by terrors and delusions that spring I know not whence? Have I not bought it—paid for it, year by year, thousand by thousand, till every rood of land is mine? Do you gainsay me? Have you ever heard any one say aught to the contrary?'

'No, father, never.'

'And all this disgrace which has come upon an ancient line, who brought it?—themselves, not I.

And all the foolish pageantry of this autumn, who planned it?—not I. Who caused it to be a mere play-acting, and not a substantial truth?—not I. Did I not show them how to retrieve ther ruin? Did I not tell them I would be better pleased to see you here as Lady Lindsay, than to own the place myself? And Sir Roderic, did he not temporise, and flatter, and cajole, trying to hide from me that his nephew rejected and despised his injunctions? And after all this wrong and insult, shall I spare them? This roof shall never shelter a Lindsay more!'

Maxwell's face darkened as he spoke, and he ground his teeth. And Judith, in that one moment of burning shame, of uncontrollable anguish, forgot all—her father's malady, his weakness, his wanderings—all but his avowal, and that bore no sign of delusion; it was truth, she was certain, or she would be certain of it. She came close to him; she breathed quickly, a spirit determined as his own moved her in that hour. 'Father,' she asked, in a low, concentrated voice, 'did you deal with me thus? Did you thrust me, your daughter, on a man who never sought, and now has rejected me?'

Her words seemed to perplex Maxwell. He gazed on her with a dull eye, and said:

'You know it, you know it.'

'I never suspected it till this hour. You did this by me, and I thought you loved me!'

She turned away, wringing her hands.

'And I did love you then, Judith; I loved nothing but you. I looked to you to fulfil all my schemes of ambition, to attain my object of long

years. I thought of your cleverness—your popularity, which I gave you unsparingly the means of acquiring. I thought that boy, a mere dreamer, would have been as wax in your hands, and you have come short in everything of what I required of you. Yet do I verily believe you might have accomplished it all, had you pleased. Yes—I have found you out. I knew, from the night when you absented yourself from the ball, that it was your will and your way, not mine, you were following. You are no child of mine, Judith; ungrateful, disobedient—quit my presence! I will have none of you!'

And he rose in a paroxysm of fury.

It was dawn when Arnold reached the Castle. Judith stood before him, pale as marble.

'It has been very terrible,' she said.

'I believe it,' replied Arnold, in a voice of deep compassion; 'but I trust to subdue the fever excitement and travelling have brought on, and he may be again as mild and complying as he is now violent.'

Judith listened with that composure which speaks at once the highest degree of suffering and of determined endurance.

'Mr. Arnold,' she said, in a low, steady voice, 'tell me all that can be done, all that I can do. I desire, above all things, to retain my post at my father's side. Make this practicable for me, if possible.'

'I will,' replied Arnold, touched by her demeanour. He went to the sick man; he spoke to him of his daughter, and neither then nor after-

wards was there a recurrence of the anger with which he had driven her from him. For this blessing Judith's thankfulness was unspeakable. The idea that other ears should hear revelations such as had reached her own, had been agonizing to her. Her tenderness, her devotion, again seemed to soothe. She did not quit her father's side for days. She knew that during that period Colonel Guildford constantly sought tidings which he communicated to Miss Evelyn; and from her friend she learned that he would not quit Duror until her anxiety should be alleviated. As Maxwell's present attack gradually subsided, Arnold thought the occasion a suitable one for speaking to Judith with more plainness than he had yet deemed necessary. He knew that she was strong enough to bear truth—that she liked to look it in the face resolutely, to consider maturely what it required of her. Though she had presence of mind enough to encounter any exigencies, she did not like to be surprised. She desired, when possible, to be 'forewarned, forearmed.' Arnold understood her well, and esteemed her highly. He now told her that her father never could recover the effects of his fall, for that his spine had sustained an injury which must gradually have a mortal result; what the nature or the length of the stages of his malady would prove, human foresight might not declare. Judith listened in total silence. Then she thanked Arnold. Her stillness almost frightened him; she saw that it did.

'Fear nothing for me,' said she; and, trying to smile, tears gushed to her relief. At this sight

Arnold left her, better satisfied that she could sustain her trial without sinking under it; Judith was thankful to be alone, that she might consider how she was to bear the heaviest portion of it. 'If time and reason are granted, as Arnold believes they will be, why should I despair of further and higher blessings?'

Judith was of the number of those 'who, going through the vale of misery, use it as a well, and the pools are filled with water; they will go from strength to strength.'

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Therefore with frank and with uncurbed plainness—
HENRY V.

GUILDFORD stood on the brow of the mountain, and looked down on Duror.

'Sybil,' he said to himself, 'is fully alive to Judith's powers of fascination; and no wonder; she it is who has polished a gem of the first water. Nobleness, frankness, generosity, wit—these were Judith's own; the high-toned principle that guides them all aright, this has been derived from Sybil. Strange that she should have a mean, fraudulent man for her father! Yet I hear it unhesitatingly asserted, that he led Sir Roderic Lindsay on by paths which ruined him, then pounced on his prey with the vilest rapacity;—and such is Judith's inheritance! The letter I received from Edinburgh in reply to my inquiries confirms all this—places it beyond a doubt. However much Sir Roderic is despised, every one seems to like young Lindsay, and to pity him, especially for the miserable farce which the uncle played here concerning him.

'How I wish my steps had been directed hither

a year or two earlier!—then I might have striven to rescue Judith from a lot so unworthy of her. Now, even though congeniality of spirit exists between us, evidenced with sufficient strength to have encouraged me in the endeavour, I do not dare to approach her. Heiress to such wealth, my motives would be misconstrued by her father and by the world. I should be held greedy of the acquisition, and regardless of the shame. Had I equal possessions to offer, that would render my circumstances different. I could despise the imputation, because I could refute it by rejecting what I deem it dishonouring to hold. But with the slender fortunes my sword has carved, I should be repulsed at once by this coveteous man, unless he feels his position so ignominious as to make him welcome alliance with any family of credit. Good Heavens! is this the position of such a noble creature? and I can do nothing—absolutely nothing, to rescue her from it! Am I certain that she would welcome escape?—quite: her words to Sybil, 'I don't think I shall ever know a happy day more,' give me a full assurance that it is odious to her. Shall I see her again? Surely I need not, I ought not to deny myself that satisfaction, if it falls within my reach. I will go now to the Castle for the last time! I cannot ask admission there; but the reports of her father's health are so improved, that I think she must emerge from her confinement before I depart.'

Thus reflecting, Guildford took the road to the Castle, and, as he had expected, heard a favourable account of Maxwell's progress. 'Indeed, sir, Miss

Maxwell has gone beyond the garden for the first time.'

'I shall find her at my cousin's,' was Guildford's instantaneous conclusion, and he turned away in haste. Meanwhile, Judith stood not at Miss Evelyn's, but at Mr. Douglas's door.

She was again in his quiet library, where she had often come for aid and counsel, to tell the griefs of others or her own. The kind old man observed that she was thinner and paler than when last he saw her; he felt her hand tremble nervously, and she tried to draw it away, while her eyes, too, avoided his. 'This is not my Judith of old days,' he thought.

He drew a seat towards her:

'Sit down, my dear child. I am very glad to see you here.'

'My father is better, or I could not have come,' replied Judith, in a deep voice.

'I am thankful to hear it. When shall I come to the Castle?'

'When you like—if you will only be kind enough to take your chance of admission. Whenever I think it possible to let you in, with how much pleasure shall I do so!'

'It is very lonely for you there.'

'Very—but,' said Judith, after a pause, 'I had an especial purpose in coming hither, and I have too little leisure to defer the execution of it. I must speak as briefly and as plainly as possible. I want advice, and to none can I turn so fitly as to you. I cannot ask it without speaking of my poor father; and to whom may I speak of him so rightly as to you, who

have a sacred duty to fulfil towards him as much as towards the poorest of your flock? I am very unhappy about him.' Her voice faltered, but she went on.

'I dare say that you know his physical state as well as I do; Mr. Arnold has very likely spoken freely to you the terrible truths he has slowly revealed to me—' She looked for assent or contradiction; Mr. Douglas gave the former.

'Then on that we need not speak. God's will be done! I know He will be merciful in the striking of the blow. It will fall at the right hour. Meanwhile, I must not be slack; and when I said I was very unhappy, I do not wish you to think of my own common natural feelings, common to every child who has loved a parent and lost one; they must be borne—they admit of no remedy, they ask none. To want the grief, were worse ten thousand times than to experience it. But I have a deep anxiety, and it is on his account; a work to do, and for him and for me it must be done.'

She paused; Mr. Douglas took her hand, and said:

'Tell me, what is this anxiety—this work, Judith?'

'I will. I am very anxious to know whether this vast attainment of wealth has been to the mischief of soul as well as of body; to learn if evil has been done that may be undone; and if so, to set about the work of restitution in any way that is possible. I wish my father—my dear father—to die in peace: and he is not in peace; and not from his own over-wrought brain can I learn what will restore it to him, though by night and day he

betrays the want of it. I have thought of a means of discovering the truth, and I want to ask you if I may have recourse to it. I do not like to trust solely to my own discretion.'

'And what are the means you propose?'

'I should like to write to Horace Lindsay—to show you the letter I write—to ask you to send it for me. I have perfect confidence in his honour, and in the rectitude of his mind. There may have been much to gall and anger him; humiliation has been brought on his race; but these things will not make him call right wrong, truth falsehood, honesty fraud. He will not strive to wipe away merited disgrace by false accusation. He will say where the blame should lie. He will tell me whether the uncle who has grievously insulted and injured him, has in aught been wronged by—by us. I am content to abide by his decision. I shall ask him not to give it hastily. He is a very young man, I dare say you will think; but he is not too young to give consideration where it is so much wanted. Now, will you sanction the writing of such a letter? Nothing else will satisfy me.'

At another time Mr. Douglas would have smiled at Judith's mode of asking advice.

He had held much intercourse with Horace Lindsay on various matters during his stay in the country, and had formed a high opinion of his candour and generosity. Having ever taken delight in these qualities in Judith, he felt pleasure in the thought of confronting the two, and giving them the opportunity of knowing each other truly. This know-

ledge, he believed, might produce good and prevent evil. The step with regard to Maxwell himself might appear somewhat extreme, but he knew from Arnold that Judith would inevitably be called on hereafter to direct and control him in some degree, and therefore it was advisable that she should be possessed of facts; and from none could she seek them with more safety than from the younger Lindsay — Sir Roderic was too dishonest to be thought of for a moment. Mr. Douglas was not without a desire that Judith should stand forth in all her natural greatness of mind, above that of birth, rank, or fortune, and clear herself for ever, at least in the eyes of Horace, from the slightest imputation. Had she sought this at the expense of her father, Mr. Douglas would have been justly shocked; but of this her filial heart was incapable, and she was impelled by as pure a desire to serve him now as in any former act.

Mr. Douglas, having these various considerations to weigh, and weighing them, kept Judith waiting some time for the answer she eagerly desired. She half rose from her seat, justifying impatience by the necessity for returning home. Mr. Douglas put his hand on her arm:

'My dear Judith, I cannot give you an immediate reply.'

'I believe—I am sure I ought to go.'

'Well then, go—write your letter, if you will—return here with it to-morrow, and we will decide.'

'That will be best,' cried Judith,—'that will be best.'

'I half intended to stop at Miss Evelyn's, but I must not,' said Judith to herself; and drawing her cloak resolutely round her, she hurried on. When she entered the hall, the first thing that caught her eye was Colonel Guildford's farewell card. Her colour changed; she threw her cloak and bonnet down as if something had vexed her, and went to her father. He woke up from sleep, took some food, and slept again. She dared not write in his room; she retired to the inner one, whence she could hear his movements distinctly—opened her desk, spread out her paper, dipped her pen in the ink, then laid it listlessly beside her, and, leaning her head on her hands, seemed lost in thought.

Lost in thought she certainly was; but had her meditations taken the direction she meant them to pursue? Was she closely considering how best to do that which she had resolved on? Judith keenly cross-examined, convicted, and put herself to shame.

'Folly!' she exclaimed, impatiently. 'Why are my thoughts to run thus on a subject of no real importance—on a stranger with whom I have passed a few pleasant, very pleasant hours, when I most needed to be pleased and cheered? Why so vexed to have missed him to-day, when, as a matter of course, to-day, to-morrow, or the next day, he was to go hence? It is not the least likely that our paths will ever cross again. Friends are not made in a moment. He will never think—yet, I do not know—I am sure he will often think of Sybil Evelyn; has he not remembered her for eighteen years?—and then will rise the vision of Duror, lake,

castle, cottage, combined in one fair scene;—and then, perhaps, a thought of one whom he met, as he supposed, light-hearted and prosperous, and left in deep sorrow for a father's sickness—that is the worst that he can know of my grief. How constant and how friendly have been his inquiries! and he would not quit Duror till he knew how it went with me—Miss Evelyn wrote me that.'

A few tears had been chasing each other unheeded down Judith's cheek, and one now fell on her sheet of paper. She started from her reverie, and angrily cried:

'Why do I waste my time, and spoil my paper? for certainly I will not write to Mr. Lindsay on a sheet blistered like this!' She hastily exchanged it for another, began her letter, and wrote on for some time.

'How foolishly have I been writing!' said Judith; and rolling up the paper, she held it in the fire. Her next composition was much more brief:

'I am no longer ignorant of the realities of the past; though I once lived, spoke, acted, in utter unconsciousness of their existence. I do not write to tell you this; were I not certain that your own heart must have told you so, I could not write. It would be useless to address myself, in my present grief and anxiety, to one who so far misunderstood me. We met and parted as friends—will you be my friend now? I need your friendship, as to a point on which no other person can serve and satisfy me so well as you. I know you to be generous and high-minded. I believe that indig-

nation, however just — self-interest, however involved—will not warp your judgment. Therefore I ask you whether you think that any injustice has been done to your uncle in the transactions which have made his estate my father's? Reply distinctly—unsparingly. I am very unhappy now; I shall be far more so, if I fail to attain the truth of this point—it alone can do me any good, or enable me to do any. I must tell you my father's present state: I am nursing him with still less hope than formerly. This illness is the sequel of the one that went before—his fall the cause of it. How can I soothe, warn, direct him aright, unless I know the truth? Grant my request, in mercy to a suffering fellow-creature, and your boon may be blessed to him and to me for ever. Did I deem it less important than these words declare, I might well abstain altogether; but I cannot—nor will you, I am sure you will not—withhold an answer.'

There was one of her former phrases which she wrote in and out again more than once: 'Tell me what an honourable man ought to do in my father's position; then I shall know what to counsel.'

This seemed to bring into the light her distrust of her father more than was absolutely inevitable.

'I perceive that what I should like to say,' considered Judith, 'is, Tell me exactly what you would do in my place—what you would do by me, could we change positions; that is what I would do by you. Yes, I wish to know not solely what honour and honesty require, but what Horace Lindsay individually would do. But is it wise — does it

entirely become me—to express this wish? Why should I not act as Judith Maxwell would act, without asking how Horace Lindsay, or any other man or woman, would act? Can I not consider, with Mr. Douglas's help, what honour and honesty demand, and for the rest trust better to my own character than attempt to assume that of another? I could not be any one but myself for many minutes together. This is the only path I can tread with consistency—to deal with my difficulties and duties according to the general principles of truth—but in my own particular way, too. I will ask Horace Lindsay only for facts.'

The sentence was omitted, the letter carefully locked up, and Judith went to her father. She felt that a weight was removed from her spirit, and the sensation of relief seemed to impart itself to him; his manner was unusually affectionate. This touched Judith deeply. She took it as an omen that she had in truth hit on the best mode of serving him, and that he unconsciously accepted it with gratitude. She lay down at night doubly resolved to go forward; and when she resumed the subject with Mr. Douglas, she told him, not without emotion, of the observation which had given her pleasure. Nor was he one sternly to destroy the fanciful gratification. He knew that Judith possessed as much of the sterling good sense of her countrymen in general, as of the lively imagination of the Highlander in particular.

Mr. Douglas was admirably qualified to educate and to direct others; he never lent the least more

aid, nor exercised the least more control, than was indispensable; therefore they who learned of him had a fair chance of one day being able to walk alone. He read Judith's letter, approved of her having restricted herself to a single inquiry, and told her that he would enclose it in one of his own to Horace Lindsay.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Our strong possession and our right for us—
Your strong possession much more than your right.
KING JOHN.

AS Judith returned home, she permitted herself to stop at the Cottage. Miss Evelyn's present loneliness set her conscience more at liberty than yesterday, when she felt that, in all probability, she should find Guildford there. Satisfaction in the measure she had just accomplished gave her more cheerfulness than Miss Evelyn had exactly expected; and, instead of rejoicing, as she usually did, to see Judith's spirits bear her up on the deep waters of affliction, she felt somewhat annoyed.

It had happened that Arthur Guildford, on the preceding day, after arriving at the Cottage, sure that he should find Judith there, or that she would soon come, in the long uninterrupted conversation which ensued, as his expectations grew more and more faint, had ended by disclosing to his cousin all his doubts and his difficulties, his inclinations and his disinclinations. Sybil had been his boyhood's

friend, and now she listened with more than the usual measure of sympathy which the real feelings of any human heart, the real workings of any human mind, always obtained from her. Judith also was concerned; how could the discourse fail to be of absorbing interest? Guildford departed, having exacted from her a promise that she would not fail to communicate to him every occurrence at the Castle that could affect his proceedings. She had gone over in memory every little circumstance of the acquaintance between her cousin and Judith which she knew of, and fancied that here and there she could discover indications of something very unlike indifference on the side of the latter. But when Judith entered now, with a face of unlooked-for contentment, she inwardly asked:

'Has she, then, a heart that can never be touched?'

For Sybil did not choose to think that, if Arthur Guildford failed, another might succeed.

'I had hoped to have seen you yesterday, my dear,' she said, 'when I heard you had come down from the Castle.'

'I hoped so, too, and intended it,' replied Judith; 'but I was forced to give up the idea. How did you know I was out? Did you see me pass?'

'No, indeed, though we watched for you.' *We* made Judith's colour change a little. 'Arthur brought me word that you were out, and he thought he should find you here.'

'The little time I had to spare, I spent with Mr. Douglas,' said Judith, hurriedly; 'but to-day I knew you would be alone—'

'And you come to cheer me? Thank you. I certainly shall miss my cousin much.'

'But it will always be pleasant to you to remember his visit.'

'Well, I hope it will be pleasant to him to repeat it.'

Judith changed her position, and wished that Miss Evelyn would not talk any more of Colonel Guildford; yet, had Miss Evelyn divined and complied with that wish, perhaps she would not have been satisfied then. But Miss Evelyn either did not divine, or divining, did not choose to comply:

'You think him a very agreeable companion, don't you, Judith?'

'Oh! yes—very.'

'He has much knowledge of a variety of countries and modes of life, great observation, and good judgment in the selection of what is best worth remembering.'

'I perceive those qualities in him.'

'And then his conversation is perfectly simple: he has no petty private motives at work; he never leads you round to a point at which he can introduce an anecdote which he has been accustomed to think he relates with peculiar grace or wit. His words flow in a natural, not an artificial bed.'

'Ah!' exclaimed Judith, 'I saw that the first time I met him. At Duror, I one day sat beside a lion of Lady St. Helens; I soon found that he was not going to say anything for me alone. He tried one or two anecdotes on me, and having proved them, at the first interval he reintroduced them to the whole company. I remember I observed the

difference between him and Colonel Guildford. At first, when the latter told me (and told so well) some facts of remarkable interest, I expected to hear them repeated. To my surprise, he went on to something fresh, and I, or any one he spoke to, had really the diamonds and the pearls that fell from his mouth for themselves. And then no snakes and toads followed; all bright and pure; no little malicious anecdotes, or cutting sarcasms. It is fair to borrow a simile from a fairy tale, when speaking of an Oriental traveller like your cousin.'

Miss Evelyn smiled, well pleased:

'We cannot expect not to miss him,' she said, and sighed.

Here were a 'we' and a sigh, which again rendered Judith embarrassed, and she remembered that she must depart.

'I shall not drive Arthur to despair,' thought Miss Evelyn, when alone. 'Never were any characters better suited to each other, and circumstances, untoward now, will alter; I am sure they will. How silly my former feelings of disappointment with regard to Horace Lindsay seem to me! All is best as it is: he has lost Duror, the only thing which made Judith indispensable to his welfare; and Beatrice is worthy to make his happiness. I love them both, can do justice to both now with a spirit free from jealousy. I will allow,

> 'There's not a flower that droops in the green shade
> More winningly reserved'

than Beatrice; she is like the sweet-scented, fair-blossomed Myrtle of her native soil, and would not,

I believe, live out of a poetic atmosphere. My Judith emulates her mountain Heather, flourishing in all climes, not to be crushed by adverse circumstances, nor nipped by inclement skies.'

Judith returned to the Castle bearing with her a remembrance of a certain cheerful expectation of Guildford's return, which Miss Evelyn had expressed. She went to her father's room, bent over his chair, and offered him a few bright flowers.

'From Miss Evelyn's garden, dear father.'

Maxwell accepted them graciously.

'I shall get out again soon myself, Judith. I am much better to-day.'

'I really think you are,' said Judith, heartily.

Maxwell looked thoughtful, contracted his brows, then said suddenly:

'You have done me an infinite deal of good by getting rid of that fellow Donaldson.'

Judith started. Here was that old delusion again!

'Don't you hear what I say?'

'Oh! yes, father. Indeed, you shall have nothing to torment you that I can help.'

And now Judith looked back with renewed pain to the time when she was her father's right hand and secretary. She recognised bitterly how all things must be changed, when she could no longer even wish to resume the post. Then, how proud and how cheerful had she been through difficulties and anxieties! Now, how forced the gaiety by which she yet sought to enliven Maxwell's all-pervading gloom! She was certain, too, that her father's feelings had undergone a change towards her—that he regarded

her with a sort of suspicion. He made her write a letter to his lawyer in Edinburgh, desiring him to send down a clerk by means of whom he transacted all the business connected with the Duror property. When this man was absent from his side, he often treated his daughter with moroseness.

Judith's letter to Horace Lindsay did not long remain unanswered.

'My dear Miss Maxwell,' he said, 'you yield me no more than justice in regarding me as so cordially your friend, that I would do my utmost to render you a service, or to lighten your anxiety. To answer the question you put to me is a matter of extreme difficulty. That Sir Roderic received from Mr. Maxwell the sums of money which he could repay only by the surrender of his estate, is undoubtedly true, and therefore it is, in a certain sense, but honest that they should be repaid. That the latter, in his capacity of agent, ought never to have made the former his debtor, I think; yet, had he refused, warned, expostulated, I have no doubt but that my uncle would have discovered some other mode of ruining himself; and in this fact, I suppose, Mr. Maxwell considers that he finds his justification: I do not.

'I must be allowed to deplore that the neediness of the one and the ambition of the other made them utterly disregard their duty towards you and towards me. Here, however, my uncle might plead one slightly extenuating circumstance. He did not know that, before he called me to Duror, I had already seen and loved the only woman I can ever

desire to make my wife. I am now endeavouring to obtain such an independence as will enable me to effect that object. I am going to Florence as Lord ——'s private secretary after Christmas, and hope to advance further, ere long, in the line of occupation most open to me. My sister accompanies me, while Miss Courtenay will remain in England to pursue that end which she will never relinquish unaccomplished, and in which she has a friend to serve her as zealous as Lady St. Helens in her most enthusiastic moments: I mean Lady Rhoda Marlowe.

'You see, my dear Miss Maxwell, that I must have a full assurance of your friendship, or I could not offer you these communications. If I can in any way serve you, pray write to me. I am sincerely grieved to think of the anxieties of your present position. Mr. Douglas and Miss Evelyn will afford you valuable support and consolation, and I rejoice that you possess such sources of both in addition to those which have an unfailing spring in your own heart.

'I am, faithfully yours,

'Horace Lindsay.'

'Yes,' said Judith, 'I am answered. Thanks to you, Horace Lindsay, for your dispassionate truth. You are faithful: you have told all I need to be told; the rest I must supply myself; and at once my conscience pronounces that the money which never ought to have been lent, the lender ought to be content never to regain. I will, as occasion permits, make this conviction known to my father, and thus bear testimony to the truth he is

averse to. I must, in order to plead in such a cause, be temperate, be patient—and by nature I am neither. But surely grace will prevail! I shall not be permitted to mar, by my infirmities, the solemn work I have in hand. I will sow the seed, and wait for its silent growth. I will be so duteous and so loving, that he shall not, for a moment, be able to attribute to a want of affection the opposition his will meets with from me. He shall be forced to recognise that it is the very depth and intensity of my love that makes me desire to see him lay down what he cannot keep without a burden of guilt. 'Keep conscience as the noonday clear!' Ah! if, for his own sake, he would make that his sole object; if, for mine, he would believe that I covet no inheritance but that of an unspotted name!'

CHAPTER L.

The spirit of a man makes felicity and content; not any spoils of a rich fortune wrapt about a sickly and an uneasie soul. JEREMY TAYLOR.

MAXWELL, returned from the daily ride by which he sought to invigorate his wasted frame, stood on the terrace of Duror a pale and melancholy man. He had just experienced one of those mortifications, of no infrequent occurrence, which taught him but too plainly that he was despised and disliked by the class of men with whom he now claimed to be on a par. With gloomy indignation, he remembered that it was Horace Lindsay's rejection of his proposal which had thrown him into a position which proved so little satisfactory, while the acceptance of it would have afforded the most complete gratification to his pride. Had Horace Lindsay consented to become his son-in-law, Maxwell would have espoused his interests with entire devotion; as it was, he regarded him with vindictive wrath. Judith watched her father's abstracted looks, but did not read them aright, or she would have known that his present mood of mind was precisely that in which it was vain to

approach him—vain to yearn, as she did, to break down the reserve which now chilled their intercourse, and speak to him heart to heart. Maxwell became aware of her earnest gaze, and grew uneasy under it. At length, with an impatient gesture, he exclaimed:

'Judith, in all this scene before you, can your eyes find no object more agreeable to rest on than me?'

'None of half the interest,' replied Judith, her eyes filling with tears. She came nearer, and placed her hand on her father's arm, as she had often done before; that arm was withdrawn with coldness. Judith clasped her hands tightly together, and stood there mute, and resolutely restraining the burst of emotion to which she would gladly have yielded: she had learned composure with her father.

'If you think that I am ill, Judith, which I suppose this signifies,' said Maxwell, in a tone of irritation, 'these scenes make me much worse.'

'Father, I was not thinking so much of your bodily health, as that I could not bear to see you look so spirit-sick, so dejected. I followed your eyes to our home yonder, and thought it was not so there.'

'Few,' replied Maxwell, gloomily, 'can turn back to the past, and not perceive that they have suffered loss. Vigour of body and mind depart, and these are no pleasant thoughts to have obtruded on one. Is this your way of cheering? I, too, recal a time when you were better skilled in that art.'

'The surgeon dares not heal the wound that has

never been probed,' answered Judith. 'Take courage, examine, cleanse it fairly for yourself, and none shall bind it up more tenderly than I.—You look surprised; but I have prayed for, waited for an opportunity of speaking with you, for once plainly; and I believe it is now come. I entreat you to let me proceed. Oh! father, we were happy together once; it is not so now.'

'You have treated me with ingratitude,' interrupted Maxwell. 'You have set aside your father to follow after other friends; you have ceased to show me respect.'

'I have followed none but you, or I should not be now at your side. I have not been ungrateful: I have forgiven—much!'

Maxwell looked with surprise on Judith as she stood before him speaking these words; a glow darkened her face, her lip quivered, her throat swelled, and her voice was low and deep.

'I charged you with a want of respect. When a child speaks to a parent of forgiveness, that charge must be just.'

'I do not think you know that I am aware how deeply you wronged me,' replied Judith.

'What does this mean, child?' he asked, somewhat timorously.

'I will tell you. You yourself revealed to me—it was in your fever-fit—all that passed between you and Sir Roderic,—with regard to Mr. Lindsay, I mean; and for this, father, I have forgiven you!'

She came towards him, placed her clasped hands on his shoulder—this time the shoulder moved not—and bent down her head on them.

'Judith! Judith! I feel that I too have somewhat to forgive. I believe that you are in a great degree the cause of my want of that complete success which was indispensable to my happiness; and as to resenting the insult you have received, I could meditate day and night on the revenge I have taken.'

'You insulted Horace Lindsay; he did not insult me. He is my friend.'

'Can a girl's fancy render you so blind, so mean-spirited? I should never have looked for this.'

'Mr. Lindsay is no object of my girlish fancy,' was Judith's reply.

'Then, why come between me and my revenge? Why constantly mourn over his ruin?'

'I grieve for his loss of an inheritance, for the dishonour of our name, and I come between you and your revenge for your own sake. Father, answer me: Would you not ten thousand times rather be at the Heronry now, respected as the faithful agent of the Lindsays, than retain all that is so unfortunately yours?' She awaited his reply. He would not meet her look.

'No,' he said; 'no. For years Sir Roderic has been my debtor. For years I have waited. It is but just I should reap at last!'

'From the day when you first allowed Sir Roderic to borrow from you, you entered a downward path!' returned Judith. 'O that, with your brilliant talents, your keen sagacity, you should ever have pursued it! It has terminated in shame here—how will it terminate hereafter? Father, no human being loves you as I do. I

know not whether any circumstances can justify a child thus wrestling with a parent—if any, mine, for I wrestle for your soul! I have sat by you during hours of insensibility, and asked: Is all quiet and still within? Does that inanimate body only for a little while weigh down a spirit ready to meet its God? I have listened to you through fevered hours, when your icy reserve was burnt up. I have heard the agonies of a mind ill at ease, and have resolved that in some such season as this of comparative health, I would kneel at your feet, and plead with you for yourself!'

And Judith did kneel; ready to let him strike her, if he would: but fear mingled with his wrath, and he asked, in a coward's voice:

'What have you heard?'

Judith's thoughts recurred to Horace's sentence: 'That upright men esteem it an unfaithful part to have furnished Sir Roderic with the means of ruin.'

'Pshaw! As if he would have wanted those means had I refused them. But from my own lips, I meant, what have you heard? The sayings of other men pass by me like the wind.'

'From your own lips,' replied Judith, 'I heard the wrong you had done me.'

There was silence. At length Judith took her father's hand with gentleness in hers.

'Dear father,' she said, in low but solemn accents, ''It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.' Know you not those words? They ring without ceasing in my ears — they make me miserable!'

Maxwell trembled as he listened; assuming a sudden rage as much as feeling it, he shook her from him:

'Child,' he said, 'you have overstepped all bounds. I have permitted you to run all lengths. I was willing to see whither presumption and an unbridled temper would lead you. You have been over-lauded, over-indulged, on all sides. For some time I have felt that you were wanting in due subordination. Go, study your own duty, and never think of again preaching mine to me.'

He turned and entered the house, walked with a tolerably firm step into his library, and sank into an arm-chair. There, with his brow pressed on his hands, he asked:

'What would she have me do? How little she knows!' He fell into a deep reverie.

In the darkness and stillness of the night, turn his eyes where he would, it seemed to Maxwell that he saw these words, written in characters of fire:

'It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.'

That sentence he never again forgot; and at times he felt as if Judith had committed no offence so great as that of engraving it on his memory.

CHAPTER LI.

If our affections be not fixed above,
We wrong our God, ourselves, and those we love.
Then, take each idol from me, leave me free,
That I may nothing love but what I love in Thee.
THOUGHTS IN PAST YEARS.

'MOTHER, I have resolved not to let Miss Courtenay leave us without going over to Eveleigh,' said Eva Clare. 'I shall drive her myself with my ponies. You are not afraid of me now, are you, Miss Courtenay? You were a little at first. You thought it would be a terrible thing were I to break your neck; and, really, considering the wonderful musical instrument you carry in it, (just two inches long, is it not? yet putting all our ponderous, complicated machines to shame,) so it would. Come, let me take my lesson; and if I am a good girl, promise me that I shall drive you this afternoon.'

'Certainly,' replied Beatrice, with a smile. 'Instead of being rendered miserable by fear, I enjoy your driving very much. You are never so agreeable as when you have your whip in your hand, and your ponies under your control.'

'Do you think so? I am charmed by the disco-

very of your opinion. I feel, mother, that while Camilla is absent, we ought to do all and to be all for poor Vincent that we can devise; don't you?'

'Oh! yes, my child, certainly.'

'His delight in music, Miss Courtenay, is something remarkable: but never mind that now—I shall tell you all about him as we drive there.'

The two girls went to the piano. Eva had few of the qualifications of a good singer; but she and her mother thought that it was desirable for her to sing, and they had welcomed Lady Rhoda's suggestion, that they should invite Beatrice to Maplehurst, and see what her skill could effect. Once acquainted with her, charmed with her beauty, and not discouraged by her shyness, Eva—a merry, warm-hearted girl—enjoyed Beatrice's society much; and Mrs. Clare, kind to everybody, did all she could to make her happy; only observing:

'She is wonderfully silent, and, I should say, dispirited, for so young a person: but Lady Rhoda says it is her way; and she speaks so highly of her, that I quite like her as a companion for you, my dear Eva.'

Eva was soon weary of her singing:

'It is a thousand pities to let the brightness of noon go by. These few fair days of autumn are not to be neglected. Let us start at twelve; we shall get to Eveleigh for luncheon.'

She rang the bell, and ordered her pony-carriage:

'Now it is useless to attempt any more music. It takes one a long time to pack for driving, this cold weather.'

'A charming drive, I promise you,' cried Eva, as

she seated herself, and carefully arranged a cloak round Beatrice, as if she thought her the most valuable of the two. 'We shall skirt the woods for about three miles, and then crossing the river, enter immediately the grounds through which it runs. Good-bye, mother dear; take care of yourself, and walk while the sun shines.'

'Now, Miss Courtenay, I must tell you a great deal about these people before we get there; it would never do for you to see them in ignorance. Mrs. Eveleigh, of Eveleigh, would scarcely suspect a person of being in such a state of darkness, to be sure. I will tell her you are almost a foreigner; and that will excuse any deficiency you may happen to betray if you forget my information.'

'But such a woman as you are describing has probably a great dislike to foreigners.'

'I don't know that she has, and in her own house she would never show an antipathy or a preference. There are Eveleighs of all sizes, none of them come to a presentable age; clumsy, red-handed girls, who may yet be refined into beauties—and boys whose only ambition is to get a gun and to follow a fox. But Vincent and Camilla, you know, are Clares, and very different—my first cousins, and anything but dull or stupid; Clares never are either, as I hope you would anticipate from your present knowledge of the family. They live at Eveleigh, because Mrs. Eveleigh is their guardian (that is, Vincent's—Camilla is of age), and it is near London, and is judged good for him, poor fellow!'

Eva's face grew serious, even sad; she lowered her voice, and let her ponies slacken their pace:

'I am so used to Vincent myself, that I hardly know how he would strike a stranger.'

Beatrice watched with interest Eva's altered manner and moistened eye.

'Why, Miss Courtenay,' she said, 'my poor young cousin, he is but eighteen;—an affection of the spine has not only distorted his person, but has destroyed his health. There is a terrible attack which takes him at times; but his intellects are unimpaired, and even of remarkable brilliancy on some points. Arduous study, of course, he has been debarred from; and as all professions are closed to him, it is unnecessary. He will have quite fortune enough when he is at age, even for the indulgence of his lavish generosity. He has the keenest feelings; he is very affectionate. His talent for music is really extraordinary; he will amuse himself for hours when well enough. Extempore compositions are his delight; he wanders on, working himself up to the highest pitch of excitement, and he cannot be deterred when the humour seizes him. Not good for him, I suppose; but still his only pleasure, his only stimulus—and other young people have so many.'

'Good for him, and bad for him, too, I should think,' said Beatrice. 'Are there none who can, in some degree, regulate the indulgence?'

'In some degree,' replied Eva, 'and as he will permit; for, poor dear creature, his temper is naturally irritable, and especially at seasons of excitement. But I have seen music—sacred music—soothe him into an angel's calm!' Her voice faltered.

'Ah!' exclaimed Beatrice, 'how well I can understand that! And his sister—'

'Ah! Camilla — she is a peculiar creature. I never saw one being so absorbed in another as she is in Vincent. One cannot guess what she would be without him.'

'Absorbed in some one else, I suppose,' said Beatrice: 'those who can live in others, always find some other in whom to live.'

'I don't think she could transfer, carry on her devotion to him to a new object; it makes her now appear indifferent, and even harsh, to others. I would have loved her long since, but she will not let me.'

'And Vincent, will he?'

'He always welcomes kindness, and she is grateful to you if you give him pleasure, providing you do not give in any way that displeases her, which it is not easy to avoid. You are constantly in danger of doing something that she thinks injurious or ill-timed. Then she gets into a state of terrible irritation herself, and offends those who meant to be kind, by her ungraciousness.'

'Poor girl! I can understand her fears and her nervousness; there must be much to excite them. But it is a pity that they should make her harsh.'

'Oh! it is her temper. She has strong feelings; and Vincent's sufferings are an abiding, bitter grief to her.'

'Not necessarily bitter,' said Beatrice, in a low voice. 'Waters of Marah may be sweetened.'

'They are not so to her yet,' replied Eva, gravely, reading Beatrice's meaning. Then, after a pause, she added: 'There are causes, excuses, for her feeling this trial as she does. There is a root of bitterness

in it, certainly; for she may reasonably suppose that it might have been spared—by a right exercise of human reason.'

'Is she older or younger than her brother?'

'Older—three-and-twenty. She has given herself wholly up to him; she has never thought of marrying. It would be a bold man who would approach her with soft speeches.'

'I wish we were going to see her this morning!' cried Beatrice.

'I don't think that I do,' answered Eva. 'I should not venture to introduce you without her permission, if she were at home; but I am sure we shall do Vincent good, and I want to see him.'

'Are you sure?' asked Beatrice, half frightened.

'Oh, yes! Why not? It must be good for him to be amused.'

'I am surprised at his sister's absence.'

'It was indispensable, or you may be sure it would not have occurred. She has never left him before since their mother's death, and then she was ten years old. She insisted on being educated with him, or not at all. When it was proposed to send her to school, she steadily refused to go, and carried the day. Well for him might it have been, had his mother shared some of that determined spirit! Having told you so much, it is but fair to tell you more—to make known that which has aggravated her trial, and almost palliates any sternness with which she meets it.'

'Oh! pray do. I wished to ask you what you meant just now.'

'Their mother was a weak, silly woman. She

idolized her boy almost to the exclusion of her girl from her thoughts; he was a lively, excitable child, and this disease manifested itself by the time he was three years old. One of the first surgeons in London gave his opinion on it, and sentenced the child to lie on his back, and to be kept from all exertion. Too much used to be noticed and amused, he naturally rebelled against all restraint. A long couch was made for him, on wheels, on which it was proposed to strap him down; but any attempt to carry this out threw the impetuous little creature into fits of passion, and just as a sensible, determined nurse had half accomplished the taming of him, the mother interposed, and forbid her, on pain of discharge, ever to let him cry. You know how meek and mild my dear mother is—you cannot imagine how this folly roused her indignation! She expostulated, but in vain; and she has often told me that she shall never forget the expression of agony she has seen in Camilla's face, child as she then was, when she has watched her little brother setting at defiance all the injunctions laid on him for his good. It really seemed to curdle her blood—to spoil her temper for life.'

'Poor Camilla! Oh! not for life, I hope. What a terrible trial!'

'The mischief was soon confirmed past all remedy. When the mother died, she commended her boy to Camilla; and she has indeed obeyed the injunction.'

'What inducement has been powerful enough to draw her away now?'

'The dread of leaving him by dying, I believe. She began the autumn with the recurrence of a fearful

cough she had last winter, when she brought on an attack of pleurisy, I am told, by sitting up one severe night with Vincent without sufficient clothing. He had an unlooked-for attack, frightened them out of their beds. I cannot expect that he will live long; and I really think Camilla will then die too. I am sure she will wish it.'

'Oh! no; I hope not.'

Eva looked for explanation.

'Why, you know it would not be right to wish it.'

'Her work would be done on earth—'

'How can our work be done? Christ's work is not done, and that is ours.'

'I don't think she could turn to another.'

'Another!—no; but the same—One and the same always. Let her do all in Christ and for Christ, and her work will never be done, and her object never changed.' Beatrice spoke with enthusiasm. Eva looked on her earnestly:

'Dear Beatrice, you have higher, deeper thoughts than I. It does me good to hear them—'

'Oh! no—no; they are yours,' interrupted Beatrice, distressed.

'I will try to make them mine. But as to Camilla, I do believe her work would be done, for I think her physical strength would be exhausted.'

'I can well imagine that even if she survived, she would require a period of rest; a period in which, too, she might turn her thoughts inward, and consider herself more closely than she can now, being, as you say, absorbed in another.'

'She has a very excellent friend with her. I often think she cannot return from a winter passed

with Mrs. Russell without being improved in many ways.'

'Where are they?'

'In the South of France.—But here we are at Eveleigh. This is the last gate.'

Eva drove briskly through it, and up to the door.

'Here, Charlie,' she cried, 'you may take the ponies round, and mind they are well done by. Who is at home?—everybody?'

'Yes,' said the boy, helping Beatrice down awkwardly, but gathering up the reins with much skill as he placed himself in Eva's seat; 'you will find them all in the house.'

But a troop of servants now appeared, for the Eveleighs lived in state, and Eva and Beatrice were ushered in due form into the drawing-room. Mrs. Eveleigh was there, beautifully dressed; but a monotony pervaded look, tone, and manner.

'How is Vincent?' Eva soon asked.

'Tolerably well. He is in the library; he always sits there. It is a cheerful winter-room; the morning sun shines on it.'

'And Camilla—have you heard of her?'

'He hears every week. She is perfectly well, she says, and eager to return.'

'But will she?'

'Oh! not before Easter; it is impossible. She is well only because she is in a mild climate.'

'May I go to Vincent?'

'Certainly; but take off your warm cloaks in Maria's room; and she shall show Miss Courtenay the conservatory before luncheon, if she pleases.'

'I want Vincent to hear her sing; but I suppose I had better go to him first alone.'

Maria looked rather alarmed at the thoughts of Eva's friend being passed on to her; but when Beatrice had taken off her bonnet, and she saw how young she looked, and how good-natured, she got rid of any awful ideas concerning a foreigner, and a lady who could teach singing. The other girls came in, one by one, till their early dinner should be ready; and Beatrice, as well as themselves, was glad when Eva returned.

'We shall find Vincent in the dining-room,' she said; 'he will like a little music very much before we go.'

Beatrice, as she entered the room, perceived a person seated at the table, evidently on a seat raised above the others, but she avoided turning her eyes towards him. She soon perceived that the children looked to Vincent as to one whose remarks were a source of constant amusement to them; interested as she had been in Eva's account, she would gladly have listened to him herself, but was forced to carry on a conversation with Mr. Eveleigh, who was disposed to be very courteous to the graceful and beautiful stranger. She could only now and then catch a sentence, which appeared to her to be pungent, but certainly not ill-natured. At length the meal was over, and Eva proposed that they should go to the library.

'Though we call it the library, Vincent's piano is there.'

She drew Beatrice's arm within hers, with the good-natured design of leaving her cousin at liberty, and led her on.

The piano was open, and strewn with music, on which Beatrice cast a rapid glance.

'Mozart, Beethoven,' she said. 'You do not like Italian, perhaps?'

'Oh! yes I shall, when sung; but I can't sing,' replied Vincent.

Beatrice, for the first time, raised her eyes to his face, and was astonished by the extreme beauty and intelligence of the large, grey, melancholy eyes that met hers. She observed the singular length of the dark lashes which overshadowed them, and fringed even the lower lid thickly. A countenance so full of thought and feeling seemed to reinstate Vincent among his fellow-creatures—nay, to lift him far above the common herd. From the moment Beatrice looked on it, she addressed him without further embarrassment, and felt a compassion no longer very different in nature from that which every description of sickness or suffering, if severe, excites.

To song after song Vincent listened with increasing enthusiasm. His cousin put her hand upon his arm:

'Now, Vincent, can't you play something yourself? I do want Beatrice to hear you.'

Vincent knit his brow with a troubled expression:

'No, I think not. She has disturbed, startled me too much—taken me too far away from myself. I cannot improvise to-day—at least, not yet. But wait—I shall not be at ease until I have expressed an idea which suddenly floats before me. Let me try—I must catch it, if I can.'

With closed eyes, he ran a rapid, brilliant finger over the keys. He struck some leading chords.

Passages of intricacy followed, in which he seemed in pursuit of an idea which baffled and evaded him. He broke off in anger, and recommenced with increasing vehemence. He played a few bars which bore the promise of pathos in them; and Eva, to soothe and encourage, uttered some exclamations of praise, provoking an impatient rebuke.

Beatrice was silent. She knew that he had not attained the expression of his thought; he knew it well, and read the corroboration of her silence. He made one more desperate effort, and failed.

'It is not that!' he cried, and darted from the room, to rush to his own chamber, and shed a paroxysm of tears.

Those around were not unfamiliar with such a scene. Beatrice looked alarmed, but did not venture to make any inquiry or proposal, and no one followed Vincent. Eva said, sorrowfully, after a short silence:

'We shall see him no more to-day. Maria, I hope he will not be ill!'

'Not if we leave him to himself as long as he likes. It is best not to seek him yet. I don't believe even Camilla would go, were she here.'

'Then I will not,' replied Eva. 'I wish I had not asked him to play.'

The two girls departed graver than they came.

'You see exactly what it is,' exclaimed Eva, after they had driven some distance with scarcely the exchange of a word. 'An extraordinary being! full of impulse and imagination; and what a frame for a spirit like his!'

'It will soon free itself!' returned Beatrice, 'and spring up to Heaven. I can see that plainly.'

'Poor Camilla!'

'Oh! she would not keep him here in chains; she must love him too well for that.'

The next morning, at the breakfast-table, Eva exclaimed:

'I see one of the Eveleigh servants riding up the avenue; news of Vincent, no doubt. Mamma, I must throw up the window and ask.'

Mrs. Clare consented, without complaining of the north wind that rushed in. The servant gave a letter to Eva.

'From himself!' she cried. 'His own beautiful hand!—did you ever see any like it, Beatrice? He can't be very ill.'

She broke the seal, and read, smiling to herself:

'I have accomplished it! I have freed my soul from the dark prison in which she was confined. I beat my wings against the bars till they bled; I sank back again and again, exhausted as you saw me; but at last I made my escape. The fetters fell off; the doors opened of themselves—or an angel did it—and I soared upward in the broad stream of rejoicing light.

'It was about midnight when my liberation was effected. My dear cousin, think of my stealthily descending the stairs, hoping, trusting that good, composed Mrs. Eveleigh would sleep through all the clatter I was bent on making. It did not last long (one quarter of an hour, I should think), and then back to my room, to sleep like a tired child. But now, in all the freshness of morning, I have played

it again, losing not a note. I am content; I am joyful—so joyful that I cannot refrain from communicating my joy to you.

'And now, dear, kind Eva, you must come to see me again, and bring your friend. She must hear what she inspired; and she will, I think, allow that I can now do better than the miserable attempts I made yesterday.'

'There, Beatrice, is a strange letter for you—read that.'

'And when shall we hear him?' asked Beatrice, as she concluded.

'Oh! the sooner the better, I imagine; for he will have no peace until he has played this composition to us. Mother, may we go in the afternoon?'

'Well, if it is really necessary to Vincent's quiet.'

Accordingly, Eva and Beatrice went; and Vincent hurried to the piano:

'You must not sing, not a single note. You may distract my brain.'

He began with rapidity an introduction which led to an air of such extreme pathos, that while he played it the tears rolled down his cheeks. When he ceased, his eyes sparkled with light; and, turning to Beatrice, he said:

'I could well perceive your gentle pity for me yesterday. You thought you had done me nothing but harm; but you see now it was not so. I am better, happier than I could have been had I never listened to your voice. Promise me I shall hear it again.'

CHAPTER LII.

Non vo' parlare altrui
Se non a cor gentil che in donna sia.
CANZONE DI DANTE.

WHILE Beatrice's visit was nominally at Maplehurst, the greater part of her time was spent at Eveleigh. All the children loved her, far better than they had ever loved Camilla; and they pleaded that Vincent, since his sister's absence, had never been so well nor so happy as when Beatrice supplied her place. Alas! poor Vincent! Beatrice, without a misgiving, yielded herself up to the endeavour to cheer and amuse him during the long winter evenings and dreary days when frequent illness forbade him even to quit the house. The boy, for boy he was esteemed by all around him, grew hourly more dependent on her ministerings, more covetous of her presence; irritable, she soothed—languid, she enlivened him. Remembering the happy effect her companionship exercised on Susan Grey, with the same affectionate zeal she applied herself here to meet the necessities of one so heavily burdened as Vincent; and she fancied that many of the circumstances of her life and features of her character singularly qualified her to be his friend. His enthu-

siasm was kindled in the liveliest degree by the poetry and the music with which Beatrice could charm him; and she herself found no little solace by disclosing to him many a feeling inspired by her art, which she thought no other had ever understood with equal distinctness. She poured out to Vincent her ardent anticipations of the future, and her regrets for the past. He would lie and listen to her fond descriptions of Italy and its kindly people, till he would exclaim with delight:

'Why should not I see your sunny land, Beatrice?'

'Why not?' replied Beatrice. 'What would Camilla say? I want to know her, Vincent.'

Vincent did not spontaneously reply: 'I want you to know her.' His heart said: 'They must know, must love each other.' Yet even in his weekly letters to his sister he did not frankly dwell on the charms of Beatrice's companionship, nor say how constantly she was at his side.

'I think I have made a discovery which gives me the greatest pleasure, Vincent,' said Beatrice. 'I am sure that the Mrs. Russell with whom Camilla dwells is the very Serena Herbert who sat beside me in my grief, and soothed me in that first terrible hour when I had on earth no father. Mrs. Eveleigh has told me circumstances which convince me of the fact. Let us write to them and ask.'

'She certainly was Serena Herbert, she certainly lost her brother, and now is trying to ward off the same disease in herself. She is the wife of a clergyman in London, and, when at home, is the earnest partner of his labours. She inspires Camilla with

the most lively interest by her account of the poor of their crowded parish,—their toils—their patient, untold sufferings—their generous devotion to each other. She is Camilla's most intimate friend. It is one of our favourite fancies that, when I am of age, we are to do something that will gratify and serve them.'

'And something—what is it?'

'I do not mind telling you: we think of making a small establishment in our own country place, where they may send those of their poor who are sick, and pining for air and peace.'

'Ah! this is not your home! Where is it? Do you know and love it?'

'There is no house on the estate. I must build one. You, Beatrice, shall design it for me.'

'What, on the plan of an Italian villa?—that will never do for these skies. I wish Camilla and Mrs. Russell would return.'

Mrs. Russell, through the medium of Vincent's letter, easily recalled Beatrice Courtenay to her mind—the child whose beauty and sensibility had made an impression on it not to be effaced. She replied to an affectionate, grateful address from Beatrice, with kind expressions of remembrance of the past, and interest in the future. Camilla wrote with stiffness; but Vincent said she always did so, and that nobody could judge Camilla by her letters; yet those to him were often impassioned, vehement in their strain of affection.

'I will not tell her *all* Beatrice is to me,' would Vincent say, as he mused over these effusions. 'She is too anxious about my welfare; she becomes mor-

bidly suspicious of evil on every side, always fearful that I shall sustain an evil where only a benefit is intended. She would not take Beatrice on trust, let me say what I might of her excellence. She would not believe that her influence can do me nothing but good, until she had herself tested it; and she must not come to me till winter is passed—for her own sake and her friend's she must stay where she is; and when she returns, she shall find me healthier, happier, gentler far, and more resigned, than she has ever seen me yet. How can it be otherwise, when I have listened to Beatrice's mild words, and laid them up in my heart, to repeat them to myself in the sleepless hours of night, when through the darkness I can see her radiant looks, with a halo of their own encircling them, as distinctly as when day brings her to my side?'

And he repeated softly, and with closed eyes, verses Beatrice had taught him:

'Give me not what I ask, but what is good.
Merciful Saviour! unto Thee I look;
Oh! teach me these repining thoughts to brook.
I know I were not happier, though endued
With all on which my unbridled longings brood.
. . . . . .
Give me on what my spirit may be stayed;
And that I know full well is but Thyself alone!'

When the weeks were past which Lady Rhoda had allotted to Maplehurst, Beatrice was entreated to bestow others wholly on Eveleigh, and she complied, not unwillingly: in bestowing happiness, she felt that she also relieved her own sadness, and calmed her restless desire to bring the future near; and reason, at least, acquiesced in Lady

Rhoda's assertion that it was a very good thing for Horace that she was out of town. 'Every time you come up (Maplehurst was but twelve miles distant) and he sees you, you are both of you the worse for it.' Lady Rhoda did not know the Eveleighs, but Horace did, and Beatrice frequently heard his name; for, aware of her intimacy with his sister, they supposed her acquaintance in some measure extended to him. They did not observe (for they were not quick of observation) that in speaking of him, her cheek would grow somewhat paler, her voice more subdued; other indication of emotion Beatrice gave not.

'I suppose you do not know much of Mr. Lindsay?' said Mrs. Eveleigh, one day.

'Oh! yes; I saw him both in Switzerland and Scotland last summer,' replied Beatrice.

'Vincent took a great fancy to him when he came here. You know, perhaps, that he sings very well; and he must be kind-hearted, for he studied the bent of the poor boy's humour completely, and passed a whole morning with him in the library, while the other gentlemen shot.'

'Yes,' added Mr. Eveleigh; 'and don't you remember the beauty, Miss Randolph, who suddenly found out that she could exist nowhere but at the piano? Vincent hated her. She would sing duets with Lindsay, and spoilt them. Horace was a great catch in those days, but I hear there is an end of all that now; Sir Roderic, an extravagant fellow always, has actually ruined himself and his nephew. The Scotch property is gone, and poor young Lindsay buried in an office. Is it not so, Miss Courtenay?'

'I believe it is;—that is, Mr. Lindsay is preparing for a private secretaryship abroad.'

The next day Horace made his appearance. He had ridden over to Maplehurst to see Beatrice, and, resolved not to be disappointed, went on to Eveleigh.

'My dear fellow, what a strange coincidence! We were talking of you only last night,' was Mr. Eveleigh's greeting: 'won't you give us a few days?'

This was tempting; but Horace felt he must at least see Beatrice before he could venture to reply in the affirmative.

'How is Vincent Clare?' he asked.

'Oh! bad enough, this winter weather; but he does make a manly struggle for health, poor fellow! He can't get out; and Miss Courtenay, (by-the-bye, you know her,) is invaluable to him. We asked her here to teach our girls (who have no music in them, between you and me, though their mother won't allow it), and she passes half the time in singing to him like an angel. His sister can't be back till Easter, and I don't know what we should do without Beatrice.'

'May I go to the music-room to see Vincent?'

'Oh, yes—music-room or library, which you please; though certainly the first name is the most appropriate now.'

'I know my way, I assure you,' cried Horace, eagerly, and sprang up the steps which led to it. He opened the door. Vincent was lying on the sofa, his dark, glowing eyes fixed on Beatrice, who sat on a low seat beside him, her head resting on her hand, her looks bent on the open page before

her, the mellifluous accents of Petrarch passing from her lips. Horace paused. Beatrice raised her eyes; 'il lampeggiar dell' angelico riso' flashed from them: the suddenness of the occasion of her joy prevented her from moderating the expression of it. Then, and not till then, did Vincent remove his gaze, a new interest awakened by the change in her countenance. The interruption of the opening door had vexed him; but now he recognised Horace, whom he used to welcome. The remembrance of past kindness made him feel his present indifference to be ingratitude, and he greeted him with alacrity.

'As fond of music as ever, Vincent?' asked Horace, the first words of inquiry over. 'What an acquisition Miss Courtenay must be!'

'Indeed she is!' replied Vincent.

'I cannot tell you how much I should like to hear the sound of your voice,' said Horace, turning to Beatrice.

'Then I am sure she will sing,' said Vincent. 'She is one who rarely refuses.'

Beatrice, with a smile, moved to the piano. Horace followed, and in a low voice said:

'They have asked me to stay. Can this be?'

'Oh! no—impossible,' said Beatrice, in a tone of alarm; 'but I am going to Maplehurst—I will go.'

'I could not stay, then; the place—his words—all would be full of you, and yet you absent.'

Beatrice began to sing; her voice trembled, but grew steadier as she went on.

'I see,' said Horace, 'you have all our old Duror songs here. Shall we try one? Vincent, what do you say to a duet?'

'As you please,' replied Vincent, uneasily.

'You are in pain,' cried Beatrice, who now knew every inflection of his voice; and, crossing the room quickly, she said: 'Let me place your cushions differently before we begin.'

'No, no,' said Vincent, shrinking; 'that will do no good. Go back to him—I want to hear.'

There was a suppressed vehemence in his tone, and Beatrice would not oppose him.

From one song Horace and Beatrice proceeded to another, tasting, as it were, forgetfulness of the many bitter causes of separation which had arisen since those days when they first sung them, and they grew insensible of any presence save that of each other. How long this dream of happiness lasted, they marked not, but were awakened from it by a deep groan from the other side of the room. Beatrice broke off, and rushed to the sofa, followed by Horace. She threw herself on her knees beside Vincent, who, pale as death, seemed fast sinking into unconsciousness.

'It is his old malady; quick—call the nurse—I never saw it like this!' cried Beatrice, with increasing alarm.

Horace rang the bell, went to the door, stopped, unwilling to leave Beatrice entirely alone with the unfortunate being she was trying to relieve. An experienced servant was there almost in a moment, for Horace had happily touched a bell which no other person was allowed to answer. She saw at a glance what was the matter, and in a collected manner did all she was accustomed to do, while Beatrice silently obeyed her. There was something in the

woman's countenance which acknowledged that she thought this much worse than an ordinary attack.

'What brought it on?' she asked. 'Any sudden fright?'

'Oh! no,' replied Beatrice, sadly.

With the aid of Horace, Vincent was borne to his room. The movement roused him; and, laid on his bed, he cried:

'Where is she?'

'I am with you, Mr. Clare,' said Audley, coming forward. 'I am doing everything for you.'

'Beatrice, she has forsaken me, then!' he moaned, piteously. Beatrice was about to spring to his side, but Horace's hand was upon her:

'He must not see you—I understand it all now. Let me take you away.'

Beatrice hid her face in her hands to hide her tears, and followed him.

The aspect of the house was changed by Vincent's illness. Every one moved stealthily about it; the children loved him, and Mrs. Eveleigh was grieved to see them downcast, even without reference to the cause. Mr. Eveleigh was very sorry for his young ward, although he had a habit of saying it would be a mercy for Heaven to take him.

Horace, in a few words before his departure, advised Beatrice to quit Eveleigh as soon as she could. She assented, without asking the meaning of the counsel which, for the first time, her own heart mournfully whispered. She wrote to Eva, and begged her to fetch her away.

'The sound of music must not be heard in the house, for the acuteness of his hearing is at times

almost supernatural,' said Mr. Eveleigh, when Beatrice told him what she had done. There was something very kind in the tone in which he spoke to her.

Eva came without delay, and went to Audley's room to speak of her cousin:

'May I see him?'

'No, Miss—no, indeed; he has seen too many lately. There has been wild work made with his poor brain. Oh! what will Miss Camilla say when she comes?'

Do you really think, Audley, this is worse than usual?'

'Much worse,' replied Audley, shortly.

'And have they written to Camilla?—do tell me. I have seen no one—I ran up here.'

'They have written; but will he live to see her?' The woman burst into tears. Eva tried to soothe her.

'Oh, yes!' she exclaimed, 'I am sure he will. I am sure God will spare his life. She will not be denied the sight of him, after all she has done and suffered.'

'Perhaps it would be a mercy to be spared the sight of him, as he is now,' sobbed Audley; then suddenly turning round with anger to Eva, she exclaimed: 'And if she does come, we shall see if she do not call some to account.'

'I don't know what you mean,' cried Eva, raising her voice, partly in alarm, and partly in displeasure.

'No need you should. I am not the one to speak. Those foreigners are going away with you, are not they?'

A servant at this moment came to tell Eva that Miss Courtenay was quite ready to start.

'Audley,' she said, trying to speak in a firm voice, 'you are much discomposed; you are in great grief! I am very sorry for you.—Good-bye.' She held out her hand.

'I must know something more,' she thought, as she hurried along the passage, and entered the drawing-room to take leave of Mrs. Eveleigh. Beatrice had already done so, and was in the carriage with Annunziata.

'Can you account for this attack of dear Vincent's?' she asked, tremulously.

'No, my love, not exactly—no one ever can,' replied Mrs. Eveleigh, with her dullest face and tone.

Mr. Eveleigh looked more significant.

'Quite over-excited, Eva, I am sure of it. Kindly meant, no doubt, but that girl was singing and reading with him all day long. Horace Lindsay saw it in a moment; he was with them when the attack came on.'

Eva asked no more, but drove home in silence; a silence which Beatrice could not attempt to force herself or her companion to break. Eva hastened to her mother to relieve her wretchedness:

'Mother dear, you know how dull and stupid Mrs. Eveleigh is. I am sure nothing could be further from my thoughts when I took Beatrice there. I verily believe she has let them be together till Vincent is dying of love!'

'Impossible!—it can't be!'

'It is, I am persuaded!'

Eva stood quite still a few moments, then threw herself on her mother's neck, sobbing.

'Do you think it is all my fault?' she asked. 'Camilla is coming. What will she say? what will she do? Poor Camilla!'

Beatrice looked so pale that evening, that Mrs. Clare could not be angry with her; and Eva began to ask herself if she had any right to be so. Beatrice was to go the next morning to London. She felt the change in Eva's manner; but, be the cause what it might, she made a desperate resolution to brave her displeasure, and proffer a request she had much at heart. Mrs. Clare had retired, and Eva stood waiting, as if to signify that she wished her guest to follow her mother's example. Beatrice approached, and, struggling for self-command, she said:

'Eva—Miss Clare—hear me. I do not know what you think—what you may have been told—' she stopped short; the crimson blood mounted over neck, and face, and brow—'I will say it once. I never had the slightest idea of the existence of danger till the moment that revealed it.—Do you believe me?'

Eva met her steadfast look.

'Yes,' she said, after a brief pause—'yes; your countenance is too ingenuous for me to doubt you.' Then casting away all coldness of manner, she folded Beatrice in her arms, and said: 'We have all been more to blame than you.'

Beatrice no longer strove to repress her natural emotion; her tears flowed freely, and she said:

'Perhaps it was that, unhappy myself, the interest I took in him gave me a selfish pleasure; but indeed, I believed that I was making him happy—I fancied I was supplying his sister's loss, and that he grew better under my care. I do not understand it all now.'

'Dear Beatrice, are you, then, unhappy?' asked Eva, softly.

Beatrice started; had she said so? She did not intend it. Eva did not repeat the question.

'Now, Eva, I have one favour to ask—let me hear from you of Vincent. If there be anything I can do—anything he wishes—'

'I will write to you regularly,' replied Eva; and they parted friends.

CHAPTER LIII.

And in that music all your thoughts are love.
THE BAPTISTERY.

EVA was faithful to her promise, and kept Beatrice constantly informed of every variation in Vincent's state of danger; at length she had also to communicate the arrival of his sister. Beatrice, now in London, felt a great desire to seek Mrs. Russell, who had returned with Camilla Clare; and while she was considering, with some timidity, how to proceed, Mrs. Russell sought her. Beatrice found the Serena of old days, and throwing herself on her neck at the mention of Camilla's name, she by degrees, and with many sobs, told her the unhappy accident by which they were connected.

'And you, to whom she is so dear, how will you feel towards one whom she will regard as the destroyer of Vincent, and who, perhaps, has unconsciously been so—a thought that makes me wretched in the extreme. Surely, to be so blind I must have been selfish too. Do you not think I must?'

'I cannot think, dear Beatrice, till I know how these things came to pass. Tell me from the beginning.'

Beatrice, calmed by her manner, as she used to be, told how one circumstance led to another, and how the whole stream had run smoothly on till it dashed over the precipice. Mrs. Russell heard with much attention; then bending forward, and kissing Beatrice's brow, and passing her arm tenderly round her, she said:

'Camilla will forgive you.'

Beatrice looked up with an expression of delighted relief:

'Do you believe it possible?'

'I do—and I know Camilla well. I do not say she will forgive you now; in grief she is one who is 'vexed as a thing that is raw,' and till that is healed she may not bear your approach—'

'I would not wound her by my presence.'

'But a time will come in which she will desire it. Her heart will yearn to look on one whom Vincent loved so well.'

Beatrice's tears fell fast.

'There is a still, small voice, that will make itself heard as the wild cries of her anguish die away: its accents are familiar to Camilla's ear; she is accustomed to listen for it—to obey its dictates. She will pardon you first, she will then render you justice, and at last she will love you.'

Beatrice clasped her hands, and, looking upward, exclaimed:

'Heaven grant that this may be!'

'Poor Camilla!' said Mrs. Russell, in a tone of the tenderest pity; 'during these months of separation from Vincent, how has she been seeking to train herself in the school of discipline, striving

to learn patience, meekness!—those qualities with which grace, not nature, must supply her. Now a severe test is applied. She may be surprised and overthrown by the suddenness of the assault; but she will rise again, and profit even by defeat: and you, Beatrice,—you must bide her time.'

'Bide her time?' repeated Beatrice. 'Bide any time to win her at last.'

'No human being can estimate her trial,' said Mrs. Russell. 'I know as much as can be known by any heart but her own, what Vincent is to her. She had formed a plan of life which was never to separate her from his side. She meant to provide him the food which his fervour of heart and of imagination required — to surround him with those he might love and serve. During her residence in France, she availed herself of every means within her reach to qualify her to execute a project in which she knew she could easily gain Vincent's co-operation. She believed that it would afford him as much happiness as was attainable for him on earth; but Heaven has decreed that he shall be removed to the fulness of joy!'

'And this project—it must be one which Vincent has spoken of, but has scarcely formed.'

'Probably; she has matured it in her absence, and not yet communicated it to him in its present extent. She intended, as soon as Vincent should be of age, to propose to him to open within their own dwelling a small ward for convalescents, to be filled, at least in its commencement, at Mr. Russell's discretion. Under the same roof, she hoped to include a chapel for their use, a chaplain, and some choristers,

who were to receive a good education, and to be chiefly under Vincent's superintendence. By this means, she desired to develope and to sanctify his talents for music, and to guard against their exciting him in a dangerous degree.'

'What a delightful, what a soothing vision!' cried Beatrice.

'And one that can never be realized! Vincent will join the choirs above; and my poor Camilla—Well, perhaps she will come to us, and we will strive to help her.' Mrs. Russell sighed.

Vincent's sister had travelled day and night till she reached his side. Her tall, drooping figure and contracted chest told what her physical constitution was, and surprise was felt at the fatigue she could sustain. From the moment that she looked in Vincent's face, she knew that she had not arrived till all hope was extinguished. She stood beside him with dark, dilated eye, and clasped hands.

'I went to treasure up life in myself for thy sake, and come to find it exhausted in thee!' was her thought, and the words burst from her lips:

'Would that I had never left thee!'

'Nay, Camilla, without your departure my destiny could not have been fulfilled. I understand it all now. Nothing is dark, nor even severe. In your absence I have had one short, delightful dream, and the waking from it is death.

'My sister, where you come, delusion cannot stay; you are reality. In your presence I could not have dreamed my dream; and I would not not have dreamed it, though wake to die.'

'Has it, then, been so sweet?' asked Camilla, as if her whole flesh and spirit recoiled from the bitterness whereof she tasted.

'So sweet,' said Vincent, 'that I look for nothing sweeter till I hear the songs of angels. Camilla, I want time and strength to make you understand *her* aright—to make your gratitude resemble mine.'

Camilla listened with a gloomy silence. Her rebellious heart uttered nought but: 'Had I been here, the syren—the witching syren—had never approached you.'

Nor did she tell him the indignation with which she entered the house, the upbraiding which she had designed to pour down on the head of Mrs. Eveleigh, but turned from her uncomprehending face to wreak it all on Eva—repelling her pitying advance, forbidding her to touch her, to speak to her. With all this she disquieted him not, and no other was likely to do so.

'Sister, kneel down by me, and give me your hand; so may you best hear what I would say.

'She led me onward, upward, hour by hour. 'Them that are gentle shalt Thou lead in the way'—this promise is fulfilled in her. Like a true follower of the Lord of meekness, as she scales the height below Him, so is her hand ever held out to the brother or sister beneath her. Faith, Hope, and Love are her pioneers; and with an angel smile she points to the path they have smoothed, that those she guides so tenderly may not tread on the snake or thorn. Her labour has not been wholly in vain,' said Vincent, his face glowing, as he spoke, with an expression of humble hope that was beautiful to

behold. 'Ask those around me, if the wild fits of waywardness, the moods of gloom—the paroxysms that shook this wretched 'house of clay'—were not becoming of less frequent recurrence; whether there were not dawnings of contentment with a lot against which, at times, I had uplifted myself with a rebellion as proud as impotent? I test myself by the present. The acquiescence I now feel proves to me that she did not only soothe me by infusing delight into hours otherwise dreary, but that her example brought me more under the influence of grace—nearer to the One Comforter who can speak comfort to such as I.'

Vincent was silent; did he weep? Camilla knew not. She had buried her face, and she thought:

'What! I, with my high, energetic resolves—I was not so meet a guide to him as this soft girl! Can this be! Oh! my God, Thy decree of banishment was not, could not be meaningless!'

'Oh! how terrible,' exclaimed Vincent, in a low voice as if to himself, 'if any wrath or bitterness now tortured this heart! How terrible, if now I loved her less, instead of with this full, gushing tide of affection, that bears on her and you, and all it embraces, to the eternal ocean—fathomless, boundless, incorruptible, rejoicing evermore! Not in the hour of that death-pang, even, did any feeling transfix me to which I look back with self-reproach.'

Camilla raised her head, and looked on him with her dark eyes:

'What was that hour?' she asked.

'That I must tell her only,' he replied. 'You know I must see her again.' He felt Camilla's hand

involuntarily shrink from his hold, but he did not release it. 'I must,' he repeated; and then he calmly, connectedly, told her his acquaintance with Beatrice from the first to the last, and his present wish concerning her.

Vincent would not long allow his kind cousin Eva to be kept from his bedside:

'Be patient with poor Camilla,' he said, 'though you must not learn to regret anything you have done. No one has acted so well for me as you, Eva; never doubt it. You have my thanks and blessing for the past, and you must deserve them for the future. I have one thing more to ask of you: I must see Beatrice again. You will accomplish this?'

'I will.'

'You need not fear any opposition. But let her come alone. I mean that she and Camilla may meet, without any other—'

Eva started.

'It is not too much to attempt, and to effect,' said Vincent, with a smile.

Eva accordingly invited Beatrice to Maplehurst, and sent her over to Eveleigh the following morning, having received a note to say that Vincent felt equal to see her.

Camilla was with Vincent, when they heard the approaching carriage.

'You will bring her to me,' said Vincent, quietly.

Camilla rose: she was pale; the hand she gave her brother was damp and cold; her lips were parted, with an expression of agony which she could not master; and he was so calm.

Beatrice had entered the house; she shrank at the turn of the passage which led to the music room:

'Not there,' she said; 'let me wait anywhere but there.'

The good-natured Charlie, who brought her in, threw open another door, and closed it on her. She sank on a seat, and gazed into the garden with eyes which distinguished nothing. She caught the sound of a rapid step; it was suspended, yet the door opened not; she heard her own heart beat; then the handle turned, and some one entered—Camilla came close up to her, tried to speak, but her voice was gone. Obeying a sudden impulse, she placed her hand on the veil which Beatrice had allowed to fall over her face, and threw it back; then, with her large, dark, melancholy eyes, she scanned in silence the beauty it had concealed.

'Oh! Heaven!' she said, slowly; 'he meant to reconcile us, and I—I meant to be reconciled; but since you have passed this threshold, all that is gone!'

She turned away, bent down her head, and wept.

Beatrice, shocked, grieved, drew near her; as a sister she would have soothed her.

'Go,' said Camilla, 'go. He told me to bring you to him. You can find him; you know this house as well as I do. Go, and if you be the angel he says you are, tell him nothing of me that can aggravate his grief. Why, to mitigate it, I would feign!—I will be ready, when he calls, to play what part he would have me!'

There was a bitter self-scorn in the smile that

curled her lip; and pushing Beatrice from her as she tried to speak, she pointed to the door. Beatrice saw it was vain to contend with a storm of passion so violent, and quitted the room.

'Poor Vincent!' she thought; 'was this the love to cherish you?'

She went to his door, and knocked. He bid her enter. She was shocked at the difference of his appearance; she knew the look of death, and she saw it there.

'Dearest Vincent!' she said, as he took her hand; she burst into tears.

'Beatrice! these tears—they do not deplore my release? I have sent for you to ask you to forgive me all the anguish which I have inflicted on you, who never did aught but bless me, by one brief period of madness. It is past now. It was a strange, wild dream, made up of a crazed imagination—a passionate heart. I knew not how it had linked itself with reality till I saw him by your side, heard his voice mingle itself with yours, and knew that one loved not better than the other. Then I recognised that separation must come. It was an instantaneous conviction, a lightning-flash that thrilled through heart and brain, showing me all down a dark abyss of despair and death. Despair is gone; death abides, thanks be to Heaven, and I await it in the calm eventide of a love that endureth. I am perfectly satisfied. I do not even wish that you had told me earlier—'

'How could I tell you what I have scarcely told himself?'

'But you may tell me now.'

Beatrice, in a low voice, satisfied his wish; he sighed as he heard the brief tale of their love, and the obstacles over which it had yet to triumph.

'If he is worthy of you, he will win you,' he said.

'He is worthy,' replied Beatrice.

'And now, Beatrice, that object to which your talents are devoted. You told me the anguish which obedience to your grandfather's decree had cost you; there your confidence was complete?'

'Perfectly; greater than any bestowed elsewhere. I knew that you would sympathise with me there more than others could.'

'From the moment I listened to you, I resolved that my first act on coming of age should be to make you mistress of sufficient to accomplish your design. Camilla must do this for me—'

'Oh! no, no!' exclaimed Beatrice, in much distress. 'This must not be. I have chosen my own method of working it out; no other will content me, and this least of all. Let your earthly possessions belong to your kindred, if you must quit them. Do not leave behind you what to me would be a life-long grief. Oh! promise me this!'

'I will promise you to consider it further,' replied Vincent, unwillingly. 'I cannot view it thus.'

'Oh! be content to consult my feelings in it; and now, once more, Vincent, do not force me on your sister yet. It must be later if she forgive—'

'She has forgiven!' cried Vincent, with an uneasy start.

'Well, if you think the wound is skinned over, do not touch it while it is yet tender.'

Vincent sighed:

'I wished to see you together with my own eyes.'

'Perhaps you will see us from above; we know not. Let us pray for this consummation, but hasten it only by our prayers.'

'Everything shall be as you would have it,' replied Vincent, tenderly. 'And now, Beatrice, you would depart; and so it must be. Yet, before you go, I will once more hear your voice; and it shall be in that which every Sabbath, and often besides, you sang to me. Kneel beside me, and sing it again.'

Beatrice knelt down, and, with meekly-folded hands, began Mozart's strain: 'Agnus Dei.'

Vincent covered his face. So wrapt was his spirit in the melody he heard—echoed, perhaps, to his ear by angel-choirs,—that he was quite undisturbed by a light passage through the air—an almost noiseless step on the floor;—or did he think it was the gathering round of ministering spirits?

As the last notes died away into perfect silence, he drew the handkerchief from his eyes, and beheld Camilla kneeling beside Beatrice, and their hands were locked together.

'Thank Heaven!' he exclaimed, and sank back on his cushion. When he recovered from his swoon, only Camilla was with him.

'Is she gone?' he asked.

'No,' said Camilla, who, when she professed her willingness to feign, professed what she never could have accomplished; 'but she will go now, when she hears that you have revived.'

'Yes, it is best. Tell her to go, with my blessing.'

And through the day Vincent was exhausted, but serene in the highest degree; Camilla, watchful, patient, gentle; and when at night she smoothed his pillow and kissed his brow, she whispered:

'Stay with me awhile, Vincent, to make me more like *her*.'

And for this and other gracious purposes of the Father of Love, Vincent did tarry yet awhile on earth. He communicated to his sister all that had passed betwixt him and Beatrice, and saw that she admired and sympathized with the feelings of the latter. Camilla unfolded to him the schemes which she had indulged in; though never now to be realized, it was sweet to her to ascertain what his feelings and thoughts would be. He entered with full sympathy and his own remarkable earnestness into all she had to communicate. 'In some such course as this, I believe, you will best find 'peace upon earth,' he said:

'To spend the days of this short life
In prayers, and alms, and charities;
This in its fulness is to store
For ever more and more,
Where nothing dies!—'

CHAPTER LIV.

More skilful in self-knowledge, e'en more pure
As tempted more; more able to endure
As more exposed to suffering and distress;
Thence also more alive to tenderness.

WORDSWORTH.

CHRISTMAS came—Christmas, which at Duror Judith used to strive to make joyful to all. Every neighbour, rich and poor, remembered with pleasure the merriment which the light-hearted girl was the means of diffusing around. With the permission of Mr. Douglas, she would take possession of the school-room, decorate it with much taste with evergreens, and make use of it for dances and for games, on more than one holiday evening. The uninhabited Castle stood gloomy and grand. The humbler dwellings round of the agent, Mr. Douglas, Miss Evelyn—the cheerful blaze of the fire seen through their windows, gave promises of hospitality never unfulfilled.

This year all was different. Ill as her father was, Judith had no heart to be mistress of the revels; and she being absent from her post, all spirits flagged, and ominous whispers passed around. It was in vain that Maxwell, in his own name, be-

stowed far more munificent donations than he had ever distributed in the name of the absent Laird.

On the Sunday preceding the festival, the venerable minister gave warning to his assembled flock, of the celebration of the Holy Communion, fulfilling the injunction of Bishop Wilson, to 'read with the greatest deliberation, and with an affection that shall even force the attention of his hearers.'

Judith listened with the earnestness which was her characteristic, and with that home application of what she heard which prevents the application of it to others. Not so all present. It happened to be almost the first time that Maxwell had reappeared among the congregation since his illness and his removal to the Castle; certainly the first time he had listened to this exhortation; and more than one eye was bent on him, as he there stood, with pallid cheek, sunken eye, and tightened lip. To him it seemed as if all looks were directed towards him, all scanned him; and as this thought occurred, both inwardly and outwardly he became but more obdurate. Some marked his stern mien with fear, some viewed him with indignation; the best beheld him with compassion, and the worst did not envy him. Judith's abstraction brought with it its own reward. While she examined herself, she did not perceive what passed around. True it is that, as she heard the words, 'being ready to make restitution and satisfaction, according to the uttermost of your powers, for all injuries and wrongs done by you to any other,' her father became present to her mind; but it was still occupied by the intention to prosecute a strict scrutiny of the mode in which she had

striven to make him recognise the wrong he had done—to see where she had been wanting, how far her shortcomings or errors might be discovered to have retarded the accomplishment of the object of her desire. Had she prayed aright?—had she ruled her own spirit with due temperance?

When forgiveness was spoken of, and her father's delight in revenge recurred to her memory, she thought that while she had brought herself to forgive him, she had, as it were, to facilitate the victory, perhaps indulged herself in wrath against Sir Roderic, being more angry with him that she might be less angry with her father, awarding him the larger share of blame, dwelling with satisfaction on his unmitigated guilt towards his nephew, accusing him as the tempter;—his reckless expenditure first gave birth to Maxwell's ambitious schemes. She recognised that while she would have encountered any exertion, undergone any pain, to save her father from the consequences of his offence, she would have felt some satisfaction in seeing Sir Roderic overtaken by the punishment of his sins. She started as she discovered this state of feeling, and asked herself, with her usual unfaltering desire of truth, 'Can this be right?'

'What have I done?' was the emphatic text chosen by Mr. Douglas for the brief address which seemed as if a continuation of the exhortation he had read.

Judith walked homewards at her father's side with a spirit more than ordinarily humbled and chastened; and well it was she did so, for the self-control he had exerted, and the secret gnawings of

remorse (unconfessed even to himself), had brought him into a state of irritation in which it was scarcely possible not to give him offence.

Christmas passed unblessed by any words of unrestricted communion between the father and his child. True it was that he presented her with a costly gift, but it was one that said little to her heart; and she, when she brought her token of love, which she had abstained from making different to those of former years, would fain have proffered some expressions of tenderness with it, but was silenced by her father's chilling demeanour. She could not tell whether she was repulsed through displeasure, or through the dread of giving free course to a stream which, once escaped, might carry all before it.

'I shall not quit the house to-day, Judith,' her father said, on Christmas morning, glancing towards the frosty panes of the windows, and then withdrawing his eyes uneasily.

'Very well, father,' replied Judith, in a tone of sadness; and she left the room, returning prepared to go to church. She came to the side of Maxwell's arm-chair, placed his books for him, looked round to see what could be done for his comfort—lingered still, though no means of adding to it presented themselves—bent over him, kissed his forehead.

'Bless you, father—say you bless me,' she murmured; and almost before he could assent, she was gone.

There was a dignity—to those who knew her well, a grief, subdued, composed by the highest support religion can afford—in Judith's mien, as on

that Christmas morn she entered the church of Duror alone.

'Thank you; my father is ill, but I trust he will soon be better.' Judith gave this brief reply to inquiries which, for her sake, were kind, and drew it from a secret source of hope that seemed to have sprung up in her heart she knew not when or whence, and gladdened her in an hour which she had thought could be only sad.

And Horace Lindsay, no longer heir of Duror, he spent the Christmas-tide with very little thought of what the past had borne away, in the pleasant hopes for the future which Beatrice's presence inspired; and that presence even Lady Rhoda could not deny, seeing that he was to quit England on the last day of December. So she bid them all gather round her hearth on Christmas-Day. Anne was there, prepared to depart with her brother; Mrs. Fane, with her placid smile, telling that

> 'Christmas hath its words of joy,
> Not all earth's sorrows can destroy:'

Susan Grey quitted her chamber for a few hours, to look on Horace and Beatrice, and think she had never seen a fairer picture; and if the sight of it could not open afresh her poetic vein, why none could. Annunziata was in high spirits, especially because, with some suggestions from Lady Rhoda, she found a method of making participators in her joyful sensations a whole troop of shivering yet merry-faced Italian boys—organ-grinders, image-sellers, of various sizes and grades of respectability—with whom she had made acquaintance by her habit of never passing one unacknowledged as a com-

patriot. And Lady Rhoda herself, was not she happy and hopeful? Indeed she was.

'This is our last evening, Anne—for how long? When we meet again, which of our bright earthly hopes will be realized? And shall we meet again?' said Beatrice.

'I would rather you should bestow all those desponding conjectures on me than on Horace,' replied Anne, trying to smile through tears.

'Dearest Anne, the comfort of thinking you will be with him, and will see my grandfather and Mr. Howard, and write me word exactly how they look and are! and then, if I am disappointed, utterly disappointed, you will tell them.' And Beatrice looked the very image of woe.

'This will never do!' cried Anne. 'I wish Lady Rhoda were here to scold you.'

'I want none but you, Anne, to comfort me,' said Beatrice, throwing her arms round Anne's neck. 'Oh! the happiness of knowing that you love me well enough to be content that Horace should love me!'

'Did I not love you from the first?' said Anne, kissing her tenderly. 'But I hear Horace's step; he has taken leave of Lady Rhoda, and I must go to her.'

'I will not have one vow of constancy, Horace,' said Beatrice, as her last words.

'I will make none,' cried Horace. 'Vows are of weakness, not of strength.'

'Be it so,' returned Beatrice, growing paler as she spoke; 'yet one promise I require. If any change, unforeseen, unexpected by you now, come

over your heart, promise me to tell me at once, without a thought that silence can spare me anything; it would but inflict a deeper pang.'

Horace looked on her without speaking; at last he said, with reproach in his tone:

'And I—am I to claim a like promise?—Why not?' he asked, angrily, finding that she did not answer.

'It will not be needed. All my life has been passed in devotion to one or two sentiments; from them I cannot depart.'

'And from the strongest I have ever had, you think I can?'

'Do not your friends say you are too young to know your own happiness?' asked Beatrice.

'Many of them do,' replied Horace, without fear.

'All I ask, then,' said Beatrice, 'is, that when your own heart says so—when you know that it lies elsewhere than with me, tell me, that if possible, I may yet aid to accomplish it.'

CHAPTER LV.

Je me prépare fort à tenir mon rôle à la main.—
Et moi aussi.

MOLIERE.

'I HAVE been tired to death of waiting for you to come to town; and if Easter had not fallen so early this year, I suppose I should not have you here yet,' said Lady Rhoda to her pretty young niece, the Duchess of A——. 'And shame, I cry, shame on you ladies of fashion, squandering money with both hands, running wild after every novelty, if, when I set before you this beautiful young girl — gifted by nature, educated by art to perform with excellence all she professes—you show no enthusiasm in your welcome! If you fail to kindle a zeal such as shall speedily accomplish her earnest purposes, and endow her with independence of your fancies for the future, how I shall despise you all!'

'Oh! dear aunt, you despise us quite enough. Now, don't scold, don't upbraid, till failure overtakes you; and it shall not—I promise you it shall not. I am sure, I have worked as hard as yourself since I came to town to ensure success, and esteem myself amply repaid by one such look of thanks as Miss

Courtenay bestows; it comes straight from her heart to her eyes; and there is something so high in the expression of her countenance, that it seems to elevate one to be the object of her gratitude. It links one with noble purposes; it takes one out of the commonplace of life. I thank you, dear aunt, for bringing me into your romance, and feel as if you would, at last, make my sentiments as high-flown as your own, for you know I think you the most romantic person in the world.'

'Not the slightest chance of that,' replied Lady Rhoda. 'You are a dear little warm-hearted, good-natured, bright, thoughtful creature, incapable of practising any of the world's meannesses; but you are not romantic, and never will be. However, as Miss Courtenay and I certainly are, perhaps we could not have fixed on a better than you to make a trio.'

'Well, be satisfied with me on your own terms; only be satisfied. I assure you, it is quite refreshing to meet with so many amiable traits in human nature as this affair has made me acquainted with. The professional people whom I have interested in our behalf have behaved most generously. They have all offered their services gratuitously for the first concert; afterwards, they say, if her success be established by it, she may be on the same footing as themselves; but for this attempt they will receive nothing from her or from me. They would not hear of any other arrangement.'

'True generosity,' said Lady Rhoda, emphatically —'real worth. My dear Honoria, I like your musical world.'

'So do I; but, adieu! I suppose we shan't meet

again till the concert, for I have ten thousand things to do.'

'How many of them are worth doing, child?'

'One thousand out of the ten, I hope.'

'Ten out of the ten thousand, can you boldly affirm?'

'You propose such difficult calculations! But, really, dear aunt, is it not droll that ever since you engaged me in your service, you have done nothing but scold me?'

'Because ever since I have employed you, you have seemed more and more worth scolding.'

'Then I shall try to be less deserving.' And, with a kiss and a smile, the little Duchess disappeared.

On the evening of the following day, Beatrice Courtenay was to give her first concert at A—— House. Every one who was invited to purchase tickets was to be esteemed highly favoured. The best judges of music, professional and otherwise, were to be assembled; and it was generally understood that if her début was successful, no musical party of the season would be considered at all complete at which Miss Courtenay (whose birth and beauty were elements in her favour) did not sing.

The Duchess had not quite finished her breakfast; it was not much past noon, and she had supped two hours past midnight.

'I don't think my aunt can wish to consult me again; everything is as well arranged as possible. Dear, kind soul! with all her affected roughness and sternness, she is so anxious and nervous, she scarcely knows how to command herself. But we

will succeed—fear is groundless. Every one must be enchanted by such beauty and talent as Miss Courtenay possesses.'

A servant brought in a note. The Duchess read:

'My dear Honoria,—I arrived from Paris last night—such a passage! This morning I see your concert in the paper. I suppose I may still ask admission. You will find a corner for your poor cousin, whom you know to be a 'fanatica per la musica,' and who is well assured of a rich treat where you preside. I can't stay away; I shall come if you forbid, so invite me with a good grace.

'Yours ever,

'Adela St. Helens.'

'How extraordinarily entertaining! how supremely ridiculous! As I have always said, everything that is connected with Aunt Rhoda becomes a romance. Now, could I but get the young Highland laird (or laird that ought to have been—I never know the story right) to make his appearance, it would be perfect. No, it would not, for then poor Beatrice would not be able to sing a note. Even this, I fear, will upset her. Yet I do not like to exclude Lady St. Helens, if it were but for the amusement of the thing; and she had better not be excluded either, for if she takes offence, she 'stings and hisses.' What shall I do? write and tell her that Miss Courtenay makes her appearance? Then, perhaps, she would disappear. I am afraid to proceed without consulting my aunt; she knows well how to deal with her. I will go there instantly; I

shall find her at one o'clock. I can concoct a note at her house for Adela, and will leave it myself. Then there can be no mistake; and I would not, for the world, make one.'

The Duchess was prompt in the execution of her purpose. Seated beside Lady Rhoda, she put the Countess's note into her hand:

'Read that. What is to be done, aunt?'

'Done? Let her come, by all means. What a treat it will be for her!'

'Then you are not afraid?'

'Not the least.'

'I should have been of excluding her—'

'Now don't breathe a syllable of—'

'Oh! no! I never intended,' cried the Duchess. 'Why should I? I might be in perfect ignorance.'

'But you are not—no falsehood,' replied Lady Rhoda.

'No, not the whitest of lies. Let me write here.

'Dear Lady St. Helens,—My concert is for an excellent purpose: I can't explain it to you now, but trust me for its worthiness. I send you a ticket, and am delighted that you have arrived in time.'

'Honoria A——.'

'Is that true?' asked Lady Rhoda, with her finger on the last sentence.

'I really think it is.'

'I am not sure that I do not feel a little pleased also,' said Lady Rhoda, with rather a grim smile.

The Duchess departed; Lady Rhoda stood in thought:

'I shall not tell Beatrice. I may indulge myself in a little spite, if I please; it becomes an old spider spinning her web. She could not enjoy a triumph over this unworthy woman; and if she could, I would not lower the tone of her present feelings for the world. Neither will I allow of any scenes or reconciliations — all falsehood and flattery on one side. Ah! here she is.

'My dear Beatrice, you here! You must not look so pale this evening.'

'I dare say I shall not,' replied Beatrice, smiling. 'I came to know if you have anything to say to me.'

'Nothing more. I shall call for you at nine.'

'Annunziata is down-stairs, in a terrible state of excitement, wishing to throw herself at the Duchess's feet for permitting her to come with me to-night. And Susan Gray, I must see her for a few minutes.'

'I have promised her that she shall see you this evening. I shall send the carriage to fetch you here. You will not mind running up to her room for a minute.'

'Oh, no! She ought to see the beautiful dress you have provided for me.'

'I have given you no finery. You have not a taste for it—partly conceit that, I dare say. However, you will not be in your black silk gown, and Susan never saw you in any other; so let her see you to-night.'

'She shall; but I must go to her now.'

'Do not over-excite her or yourself, I beg.'

Beatrice hastened up-stairs, lest permission should be retracted:

'Dear Susan, I resolved to spend some part of this day in your quiet cell, if you do not dislike it. I shall be calmer here than anywhere. It will do me good to sit by you.'

'Will it? How glad I am to hear you say so!' exclaimed Susan, her wan cheek faintly glowing.

'Yes. You will understand what this evening is to me, without my trying to explain it. I should like to kneel here, and hide my face on your pillow, and be quite quiet, only feeling your kind hand upon me, and knowing that you pray.'

'I do, Beatrice,—I do. This is your present. I too had a present, in which I strove, and prayed, and failed, and resigned. Then I said:

—'Take me from the thrall
Of passionate hopes. Be Thou my All in all.'

For you I foresee a different future.'

'Oh! Susan, whatever it be—success too delightful to anticipate, or crushing disappointment,—may its influences be as gracious to me as those of your lot have been to you!'

Annunziata, as she dressed Beatrice for the concert, broke off twenty times from her labour, kissing her hand passionately, that she might not, by her ardour, disarrange any part of her simple toilette. Beatrice wore no ornament but a string of pearls, and white roses in her hair.

'God bless you, my child,' was her aunt's quiet parting.

Susan's was more ecstatic:

'Beautiful,' she exclaimed, 'beyond my most beautiful dreams! Go—go to a success bright as yourself!'

Beatrice bent down and kissed her; and when she was departed, Susan lay gazing on her portrait, and forgot not her desire.

In the carriage, Lady Rhoda, not venturing to be wholly silent, addressed Beatrice emphatically:

'My dear, you must not mind whom you see among the guests.'

Beatrice started; and Lady Rhoda, a little frightened, repeated:

'Never mind, I say, who may be there. It certainly will not be Horace.'

Beatrice leant back in silence, and thought of the opera at Duror.

Arrived at A—— House, Lady Rhoda joined the guests: Beatrice and Annunziata were led to another apartment, where the performers were assembled, and which communicated with the upper part of the saloon.

CHAPTER LVI.

D'abord je suis femme, avec les devoirs, les affections, les sentimens d'une femme ; et puis je suis artiste.

MRS. JAMESON. *Commonplace Book of Thoughts, Memories, and Fancies.*

WHEN Beatrice appeared on the platform, she at once received the welcome which her beauty, enshrined in youth and modest grace, might well win for her.

'Wonderful girl!' inwardly exclaimed Lady Rhoda. 'How unlike her usual self is she at this moment. She has assumed a queenly dignity, and well it becomes her. No doubt some inward feeling, excited by her novel position, has worked the change, and I should like to read it.'

True it was that Beatrice, who had already gained the victory over herself, when preparing to appear there, at this moment felt little of what is commonly called timidity. In her intense anxiety to gain the homage which she required—not for vanity, not solely for the outpouring of her rare genius, but for the accomplishment of her heart's dearest purpose, the service of those she loved—her thoughts were wholly absorbed in the endeavour

to perform her task with excellence. As yet she wanted the poetic fervour which sometimes kindled within her; it had not awaked. She commenced her song, and accomplished a faultless recitative. Not an interrupting sound was heard on any side, as note after note passed her lips with the most distinct articulation; she paused—it seemed that to enable her to proceed, it was absolutely necessary that she should receive some token that she had done so far well. Lady Rhoda felt for her and with her; her keen eye sought and met that of the one best qualified to pronounce praise. The signal given, the full expression of approbation followed; and Beatrice, inspired with a sense of success, painful in the ecstacy of gratitude and delight which it created, broke forth in a tide of song, far more exquisite in pathos and overpowering in emotion, than the unimpassioned correctness of her first performance had prepared her audience to look for. A rapturous encore recalled her as she retreated. There was at that moment some disturbance in the room, caused by the arrival of a guest of distinction. The Duchess was exclaiming, in a tone of polite anxiety—

'You must see as well as hear; indeed, you must. Here is a seat, and we have just encored for you.'

Beatrice advanced to the front of the platform, and nearly opposite to her stood Lady St. Helens. Lady Rhoda's warning flashed across her mind, and she felt herself suddenly endowed with a power to obey it. Could Lady St. Helens have turned and fled, how gladly would she have done so; but escape was impossible, and she sank into the seat the

Duchess had indicated. The accents of Beatrice, poured out as if in one passionate appeal against her cruelty and her treachery, pierced her ears; the applauses of Beatrice rang in them, as if to confirm her condemnation. Her shame was more than she could bear. And she to endure all this mortification, when she might have appeared triumphant as the patroness of her whom she had abandoned? All sounds of melody did, indeed, sound but as 'sweet bells jangled.' Her sole object was to escape from the room, for she knew not what might be in reserve for her. 'Lady Rhoda is capable of any extravagance to mortify me,' she thought. She felt herself turn pale with anger and apprehension. She half rose from her seat, sank back, and fainted.

Now, Lady Rhoda would undoubtedly have been foremost in bringing aid to any one in similar need of it, but she was also impelled by an extreme desire to know whether Lady St. Helens had really fainted or not. When in the ante-chamber, she reopened her eyes and cast them round, as if fearful what they might encounter; Lady Rhoda, after a tolerably stern scrutiny, bent towards her, and said:

'Spare yourself; we have spared you.'

Humiliating as these words were, Lady St. Helens caught their meaning, and acted on it.

'Very silly of me to come here, tired, exhausted as I was. Do get me home again, good, kind creatures,' she smiled languidly.

And Beatrice—no sooner had she retired than she burst into tears. All her companions flocked round her with good-natured encouragement and assurances, not one of them really understanding in the

slightest degree the source of her emotion. The next song assigned to her was one of the playful Zerlina's, and she had particularly desired to render it justice. She knew that she could, for it was one she had often sung with Flavio to Oreste and Maddalena, with all the mirthfulness of childhood. But now, if Lady St. Helens' basilisk eye should rest upon her, what evil influence would it exercise? She scarcely could foretel; but conscious innocence repelled the thought of being paralysed by its gaze, and she allowed herself, when her turn came, to be led back to the saloon. She cast a hasty glance around, and was soon assured that the presence so painful to her was withdrawn. Inexpressibly relieved, her song gushed forth like the glad warbling of a bird; she charmed all by her grace, and amazed them by her versatility.

The concert was over. 'What a delightful one it has been!' was the general exclamation. The guests repaired to the refreshment-room. No sooner did Beatrice appear there, than the Duchess took her hand, and led her into the centre of a circle of her very particular friends.

'No enemies here,' whispered Lady Rhoda. 'Don't waste a thought on them.'

'Beyond all hope or expectation, my dear child,' was Lady Rhoda's warm exclamation, as soon as they were seated in the carriage to return home. 'Cover yourself up, and don't speak a word. You are worth taking care of.'

'Bella! brava!' cried Annunziata, laughing and crying by turns.

Beatrice felt that she must speak: 'Oh! Lady

Rhoda, might not this have been spared—to both of us? Where did she disappear?'

'She arrived in London unexpectedly, and invited herself,' replied Lady Rhoda, drily. 'She is a cousin, you know; it was not for her to be excluded.'

It was long past midnight, but at the foot of the staircase, Mrs. Fane, candle in hand, received her niece; and her smile of welcome, though so cordial, was yet so tranquil, that it spoke peace to Beatrice's excited spirits; throwing her arms round her aunt's neck, she hid her face on her bosom.

The next morning Beatrice received a note, containing only these words:

'Come to me. I forgive everything.'

Beatrice was alone. Was it necessary to her to consult any one before she answered this? Certainly not. She wrote:

'I cannot accept forgiveness, and I feel that it will not be for your welfare or my own to renew an intercourse which terminated with much unhappiness.

'I know that my friends would approve of this decision, which I make simply in accordance with the dictates of my own conviction that one contrary to it could not but fail utterly to afford either of us lasting satisfaction. Heartily do I regret my inability to reply otherwise, for the unmerited kindness I formerly received from you is not, and never can be, forgotten by me.'

'Well!' said Lady Rhoda, when she heard what Beatrice had written, 'there was some sense and spirit in that. My dear, you don't suppose that she really fainted? If you do, dismiss your pity, for I satisfied myself that she did not.'

CHAPTER LVII.

There are no tricks in plain and simple faith.
JULIUS CÆSAR.

It cannot be
We shall remain in friendship, our conditions
So differing in their acts.
ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

'HYPOCRITICAL, cold, calculating!' exclaimed Lady St. Helens, as she read Beatrice's reply. 'I was mad to call her to me.'

She sat, with the note in her hand, musing. The door opened, and Lady Stanmore was announced.

'The greatest gossip in London! What brings her here?' was Lady St. Helens' inward comment, and she dropped the paper she held into the fire.

'My dear Lady St. Helens, I am come to inquire after your health. I was charmed to see you last night. I was grieved at your sudden disappearance —quite like a vision. You would have been delighted if you could have heard the rest of the concert—I am sure you would. Miss Courtenay will be the one object of interest of the season; no one else will be thought of. Young ladies will be spiteful—I don't mean solely because she is so beautiful, but because her success will make music more the

fashion than dancing. Every one will give matinées musicales and soirées musicales instead of balls. I heard that she had accepted twenty engagements before she left the room last night. The Duchess presented her to all her friends; and there happened to be a foreigner of rank present, who had known her abroad, it seems. Indeed, he spoke of having heard her at Florence, at your house, my dear.'

Lady Stanmore had now arrived at the real purpose of her visit, and ventured to advance to the charge.

'Now do tell me, my dear friend, if there is any foundation for the strange story that it was you who brought this wonderful creature to England? Could you have discovered her, and yet have had no share in her introduction? This is a great mystery, or a most absurd invention; and then Lady Rhoda Marlowe, of all people in the world, to start up as a patroness!'

'Very strange and mysterious, indeed!' replied the Countess, with a scornful laugh which ill disguised her annoyance. 'So very strange and mysterious that I should really expect the dull world to have penetration enough to conclude that I must possess rather strong reasons for what I have done. I am better qualified to discover genius than my estimable cousin, Lady Rhoda, I believe, and usually more disposed to bring it forward. But I never have been able to tolerate artifice—treachery. From baseness of any description my nature recoils.'

'My dear creature!' exclaimed Lady Stanmore, 'I hope we are not worshipping such odious vices as these hidden under a mask of loveliness.'

'Well,' replied Lady St. Helens, a little startled at her own violence, 'I cannot now recal my words. I must tell you how things went, and you shall judge how far they are deserved. Perhaps I expected too much. I believe I am apt to do so.' She assumed an air of candour that was very prevailing. 'It is quite true that I discovered this girl in an obscure dwelling in Florence—that I saw at once what might be made of her. I took her from her friends with a promise to do for her all that Lady Rhoda has attempted. I went to Duror last year; Sir Roderic's odious Scotch Castle!—his nephew's coming of age was celebrated. I thought it a good opportunity of introducing the girl—a preparation for greater things. I spared no expense, shrank from no fatigue or trouble in getting up a sort of opera. I soon found the young lady had no uncomfortable shyness—you saw that last night.'

'Yes, indeed, her self-possession was amazing!'

'I next discovered that she would think of nothing—hear of nothing, but marrying Horace Lindsay, the nephew in question; a soft-hearted youth, who was completely her victim—naturally enough, for I allow she has good looks.'

'Oh! certainly.'

'She rebelled against all the plans I had laid down for her. I sent her off at last, when I found how intractable she was become. I really could not bear with her—it was impossible. Lady Rhoda chose to take her up.'

'And Mr. Lindsay—what is become of him?'

'Why, in fact, he never will be his uncle's heir—

he is private secretary at this moment to Lord —— at Florence. I would have done better for him had he listened to me. I would have exerted my interest, but this girl had quite turned his head.'

'And he has offended Sir Roderic, past forgiveness?'

'Not exactly that. Understand me; I do not dispute Beatrice Courtenay's beauty or genius. She is clever enough, and—'

'Clever, indeed! she ought to be unmasked,' exclaimed Lady Stanmore—a laudable expression of indignation appearing on her countenance, when the door of the apartment was thrown open, and the Duchess of A—— entered.

Lady Stanmore, before Lady St. Helens (who meant to impose certain restrictions on her use of the narrative she had furnished her with) could stop her, cried:

'Come here, pray come, and listen to the true history of your charming paragon, from the lips of your own cousin. What Lady Rhoda will say to it, I am sure I cannot guess.'

'What will Lady Rhoda say to it?' repeated the Duchess, advancing with an air of dignity which her small person could scarcely have been supposed capable of assuming. 'Let me hear what Lady St. Helens has to tell, and then I will satisfy you on that point. Both my aunt and myself will be delighted to learn any circumstances that relate to one in whom we take so much interest as in Beatrice Courtenay.'

The Duchess seated herself beside her cousin, fixing her blue eyes on her in silent attention. The Countess's glance of fire seemed to be extinguished

by their clear, calm light, like that of truth and day. Turning from her to hide her confusion, she addressed herself to Lady Stanmore:

'Dear Lady Stanmore, your feelings are so warm, that they easily run away with you. These things are looked on quite differently according to the light in which they are placed.'

'Indeed, there can't be two opinions,' began Lady Stanmore.

'But, Adela,' said the Duchess, with determination, 'only put the matter in the same light to me in which you had just now put it to Lady Stanmore, and let me take the same view of it; I assure you, I desire only a true one.'

'I perceive plainly,' replied Lady St. Helens, changing colour, 'that Miss Courtenay has told her own story, and your aunt—I need not remind you, Honoria, that I never was fortunate enough to enjoy her favour, and that nothing gives her more pleasure than to gain confirmation—'

'Pray, Lady St. Helens, do not so mistake my dear, worthy aunt, as to believe that prejudice in her could ever take such a form as that of welcoming slander. All I ask is, that you will tell me as much as you have already told Lady Stanmore. I am sure you will not disoblige me.'

'I will repeat it for you, my dear,' exclaimed Lady Stanmore, 'if you are too tired to talk. It does seem but fair that the Duchess should hear.'

'There really is nothing to repeat,' said Lady St. Helens, raising herself with some haughtiness, ill dissembling the resentment which it caused her, to feel herself forced to endure the constraint the

Duchess imposed on her. 'I can only tell what, no doubt, my cousin has already heard a different version of—that I could not—in fairness to Sir Roderic, to myself—permit Miss Courtenay to remain in my household, when I found that her sole object in so doing was to win the affections of young Lindsay, then believed to be heir to a fine estate.'

'And now that he is fortuneless,' said the Duchess, very quietly, 'she is engaged to marry him.'

Lady St. Helens was robbed of all her self-command by the Duchess's composure:

'You do know everything,' she exclaimed, angrily.

'I believe I do,' said the Duchess; 'and I should like Lady Stanmore to know as much as myself. If I have been misinformed, you will do me the service to set me right. It is best that Lady Stanmore should hear me in your presence, because, if she, in her desire that truth may be known and justice done, should consider it her duty to repeat a story quite different from the one I have been accustomed to, I might consider myself called on to dispute its authenticity. Therefore, to save all disagreeable varieties and differences between us for the future, let me 'tell the tale as 'twas told to me,' and you can set us both right before we quit this room.'

'Much better, certainly,' cried Lady Stanmore; 'just what every one must wish, I am sure.'

Lady St. Helens spoke not, but grew whiter and whiter.

'I have been told,' continued the Duchess, with the utmost distinctness, 'that Miss Courtenay withdrew from your family full of regret, constrained to relinquish your friendship, and the only position in

which she could requite your kindness in bringing her to England, because she would not break a promise given to her only near relative, her grandfather, never to go on the stage. You thought her admirably qualified to excel in such a career. No doubt she is ; and it must have cost one, so gifted by nature, great self-denial to keep her word sacred. Now, Lady St. Helens, am I deceived in supposing this to have been the original cause of displeasure. If so, I quite agree with Lady Stanmore, that falsehood ought to be disarmed. Wait patiently for half an hour ; that is not too much to ask, when reputations are at stake. I will bring my aunt and Miss Courtenay here, and you, Adela, shall receive my own and Lady Rhoda's thanks if you enable us to take a truer view of Beatrice's character than we do at present.'

'Very candid, indeed,' said Lady Stanmore.

'Very,' replied Lady St. Helens, bitterly, 'but quite impracticable. I cannot undertake to convince Lady Rhoda against her will. I cannot make motives things to be inspected and handled.'

'Did you not propose to Miss Courtenay to go on the stage?'

'I did. I thought it the best way for her to realize the wealth and fame she sought to acquire.'

'Did she not plead her promise in reply?'

'I never believed in one.'

'Had not Mr. Howard made you acquainted with the fact long before Mr. Lindsay came on the scene? Is this assertion a misstatement on her part? Can we appeal to Mr. Howard himself to contradict it?'

This last proposal was too much for Lady St. Helens; she rose angrily, and exclaimed:

'I will endure this treatment no longer from any one in the world,' and rushed past them into an inner room.

The two ladies regarded each other in silence for a few minutes. It did not appear probable that the Countess would return. Lady Stanmore rose to ring for her carriage. The Duchess rose, too, and approached her, saying:

'You see, Lady Stanmore, that Lady St. Helens has unhappily suffered herself to take a false view of this subject. I think I have made matters clear. If any doubt remain on your mind, I am sure that Lady Rhoda Marlowe—Miss Courtenay herself—will at my request afford you every satisfaction.'

'Oh! dear, no—by no means. Nothing can be more satisfactory—I mean, when there has been any unfortunate quarrel, one can't take people exactly au pied de la lettre in their versions of it; and then, you know, Lady St. Helens, like many very charming people, is excitable.'

The two ladies proceeded down stairs, Lady Stanmore saying to herself:

'What an extraordinary story I have to relate!'

The Duchess drove to Lady Rhoda's. She gave her breathless narrative:

'Was there ever such a complete discomfiture? Was it not fortunate that I arrived at the very moment? You know Lady Stanmore. Think how the falsehood would have spread!'

'The truth, I suppose, she will circulate a little

more slowly,' said Lady Rhoda, drily; then, with a sudden change of tone, exclaimed:

'You have crushed the scorpion in the egg! My dear child, you are the bravest and best of little women.' Her eyes glistened, and she actually lifted her niece from the ground, in the fervour of the embrace she bestowed upon her.

Beatrice, who was present, would have thanked her kind vindicatress—she advanced to make the attempt, but her voice failed her; she raised the Duchess's hand to her lips, burst into tears, and turned away.

'Poor child!' said the Duchess, quickly; 'you believed that she loved you, I know.'

'I loved her,' thought Beatrice, but she could not speak, and went home to her simple-hearted aunt.

CHAPTER LVIII.

E tu-chi sa se mai
Ti sovverrai di me?
METASTASIO.

THE star of Beatrice's fame rose clear and bright above the horizon, to shine with increasing lustre; not a cloud, created by the fickleness of fashion, swept over to obscure it. Lady Rhoda had brought all her sagacity and energy (much had she of both) to bear on this point, and she carried it. With her whole heart did she rejoice; genuine benevolence, strong affection for Beatrice—for she ever loved those who relied on her for help,—and a cordial liking for Horace—young, generous, and enthusiastic—these were noble elements of her joy. A shallow under-current of satisfaction in Lady St. Helens' discomfiture mingled with the pure stream. She regarded her work with self-congratulation, believing that, without her aid, Beatrice's beauty and merit might have failed of success; and certainly Beatrice modestly believed the same.

Miss Courtenay's début having been made in ducal halls, for a while she was scarcely seen or heard elsewhere, but quickly the circle widened, ring beyond ring; her popularity became general,

and wealth poured from every side into her lap. Horace, banished to a distance, could not restrain emotions of jealousy, to which Anne opposed unshaken confidence. Sometimes he thought of the rivals who must surround Beatrice, and asserted his conviction that she had never yielded him a love ardent enough to chill her heart to all competitors; at others, he would dwell on the southern fervour of imagination which he knew to exist beneath her guarded demeanour, and argue perils to the happiness he had contemplated, from its rapid development in the present congenial circumstances.

To his doubts, and fears, and unjust inferences, what reply gave Beatrice?

'You used to think me frigid. How many words of reproach can I recal on that point! Might you not now derive some support from such a belief? Consider me too calm, too cold to be endangered by circumstances which might otherwise imperil our future happiness. But, Horace, you have never believed me either, and, therefore, you cannot obtain comfort from a purely fictitious source; I will show you a real one. Understand that I live not in the present, but in the absent; then you will know there is little to fear. How often is my audience almost unseen by me, almost at the moment when their applauses are ringing in my ears. Those very acclamations, as the testimonies of my success, of my realization of all I planned and hoped for, are the instruments of transporting me in thought and feeling far, far from the spot where they are uttered. Other faces rise up around me, other voices sound low and sweet. I see my grand-

father's look of love—the dearest remembrance of my childhood; I hear Mr. Howard's award of approbation, on which I have been accustomed to rely; I receive Anne's cordial sympathy. Ah! if you knew how these attend me through the most tumultuous praise, you would trust to the power they exercise; no turmoil of vanity or ambition may compare with it.'

'And I, Beatrice?—you give me no place among your guardian spirits: the vehemence of my love and the misery of my fears only create harsh discords which mar the harmony of your soul.'

Beatrice, on reading this fresh complaint, accorded Horace no further reassurance; she knew he needed none. There were other letters in a more cheerful strain, in which he told her how well he got on with her silent grandfather. 'We take walks for miles in these beautiful environs, scarcely exchanging three sentences in the course of them, yet our friendly shake of the hand in the Piazza del Duomo, as we part, expresses the pleasure which our companionship has afforded each other. Sometimes we explore the treasures of the city itself:

> We slowly pace through marble halls,
> We gaze upon the frescoed walls,
> The cloister's legend trace awhile;
> In Santa Croce's sacred aisle
> With reverence name the mighty dead
> Who o'er fair Florence radiance shed;
> We climb the heights which gird her round,
> And traverse famed historic ground,
> Where great Lorenzo breathed his last,
> And looks of love o'er Florence cast.
> Or when the moon its silver light

Sheds o'er the Duomo's ponderous pile
And Campanile's slender height,
In the deep shadows pause awhile.
Where Dante often came to muse,
Who could some solemn thoughts refuse?
The scenes thy steps beloved have traced
Are by thy beauty's image graced,
And tones thy dear lips uttered oft
Float by me on the breezes soft.

'Dear Beatrice, if you could but have seen the expression of Mr. Howard's most beautiful, most benign countenance, when Anne read him the first account of your success! He welcomed my sister's arrival in Florence warmly. I think that in the beginning of our acquaintance, he regarded me with a species of jealous distrust, but as he gradually grows convinced of the sincerity and depth of my affection for you, he extends his favour to me as well as to Anne. I am glad, for his sake, she is here. I cannot but perceive that his health fails rapidly. I will not conceal anything from you. He is a more feeble man than your grandfather. I believe there is a fire within which consumes him; it gleams in his eye. Yet, Beatrice, I have seen that light quenched in tears. It was yesterday, when I was speaking with him of you. Suddenly he grasped my hand, and said: 'Tell Beatrice, I thank her for her last words—she had reason to doubt whether I so much as forgave them at the time they were uttered.'

'You will know his meaning. I could not ask it.

'I am the best of friends with Oreste and la buona Maddalena. For their own sakes now, as for

yours at first, I do what I can to serve them; and my position often enables me to recommend him to the notice he deserves. His gratitude takes a shape less gratifying to me than he designs it should be. He wishes to paint me as Buondelmonte on his charger,

'un destrier che di candore agguaglia
Pur or nell' Appennin caduta neve,'

(you see I do not neglect my Tasso,) and you the fatal beauty who looked down on him as he passed; but I positively refuse to be in any shape a traitor. At times he thinks my melancholy fits me for a Tancredi, but then you are too unlike Clorinda, adorable as she is: and you must not be Erminia, for to her Tancredi was indifferent—far more so than the knight of Ivanhoe to the fair Rebecca. I must not neglect to tell you of a boy, Flavio, who eyes me with anything but affection. I would not mortify him so much as to smile at his frowns; but why does he frown on me so terribly, Beatrice? Read thou the riddle, sweet Sibyl. His father sends him, in May, to study in Rome.

'By the fierce looks he casts on me, I believe he would forbid me the Holy City, whither I fully intend to repair for St. Peter's Day. I wish to see the illumination of the Duomo, and at Easter I could not escape there. Flavio has a companion, a young Roman, with whom he returns to learn his art in the same studio. I suppose he has confided to his new friend the secret cause of his enmity, for I find myself regarded by Ercole with even fiercer looks than those of Flavio. This boy's countenance (he is no more than a boy) moves me not only to

laughter by its studied ferocity, but has a sinister expression, which causes me to feel what these youths would describe, in their favourite language of exaggeration, as 'un certo ribrezzo.' I need scarcely tell you that both are of the number of those fanatics for liberty with whom Italy abounds; few of them touch the chord of sympathy in my bosom, I confess. I hear them talk the wildest stuff, and mingle with it a reverence for the noble deed of assassination, which harmonizes ill with my English abhorrence of such baseness.

'A week ago, I went to pass a leisure hour with my friend Oreste. He was out, and I found these two youths in the studio, where I meant to await his return. They thought to assert their dignity, and to astonish me by their spirit, by means of a conversation which they carried on together, as if in total unconsciousness of my presence, and simply addressing to each other sentiments held in common. I could understand well enough all that passed, except a few cant phrases belonging to the initiated, and I thought it right to signify as much. The young Roman received the intimation with all the impertinence he dared to manifest, for I greatly doubt the fellow's valour. I see that he takes the lead, and astonishes Flavio, who hitherto has had only home training, and has felt the influence of his delightful mother. Oreste, I am sorry to say, is somewhat too much of a democrat; and his theories are as wildly impracticable as a life of inexperience is likely to render them. Poor Italy, I too mourn for her desolation, and compassionate her children. I long to see the day when the ashes shall be

stirred by the new-born Phœnix, ready to soar and shake the dust from her wings. The republican fever in Oreste's blood makes him tolerant of Ercole's folly and presumption. When I hinted that he was a companion little calculated to improve Flavio, he contented himself with calling him a young enthusiast. A young villain I am disposed to think him; and I am sorry to see Flavio sink under his control.'

This letter grieved Beatrice. She could not hope that the sway of Ercole would yield to Horace's better influence. All she could suggest was, that his friendly warnings should be addressed to Maddalena; and it was too late for Horace to act on the suggestion, for Flavio was gone, and the subject faded from his mind.

CHAPTER LIX.

> And those things do best please me
> That befal preposterously.
>
> MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

'I SAW your fine rival enter Rome to-day,' said Ercole to Flavio, as they leant over the wall of the Pincian Hill, in the immediate vicinity of the French Academy. 'He affected an air of insolent indifference as he passed me. I cannot believe that it was real. Nature must suggest a deeper feeling, an inward shudder, when a man who hates you intensely suddenly presents himself at your side.'

'Perhaps he did not perceive you,' answered Flavio, in a tone milder and more languid than that of his companion.

'Not perceive me—he is not blind!'

'When entering Rome for the first time, I am sure I should be insensible to the nearness of any human being—except one,' added Flavio, with a sigh. Then, after a while, he asked: 'Wherefore should you hate him, Ercole? Who requires it at your hands?'

'You!' cried Ercole, fiercely; 'you. I hate him for you. Be a man, and hate him for yourself; and

then, perhaps, I could be content merely to despise him.'

'Is he despicable as well as odious?' asked Flavio, in a tone of doubt; not altogether prepared to accept the idea that Beatrice's choice was an object of contempt.

'Very!' replied Ercole, throwing into the word the utmost scorn he could attain to. 'Very. Is he not one of those butterflies who come to flutter over our beautiful land, to bask in our sunshine, to hang on the bright flowers which, requiring no depth of soil, blossom and die in rapid succession? Are not such frivolous creatures utterly regardless of the putrefaction which lies beneath the surface, and of the corpses of all that are best and noblest, which burden the earth? Do they not delight in our ruins? Would they not regret to see them restored to stately fabrics of liberty?'

He burst out into Leopardi's grand and rugged lines:—

'O patria mia, vedo le mura e gli archi
E le colonne e i simulacri e l'erme
Torri degli avi nostri,
Ma la gloria non vedo,
Non vedo il lauro e il ferro ond' eran carchi
I nostri padri antichi. Or fatta inerme,
Nuda la fronte e nudo il petto mostri.
Oimè! quante ferite
Che lividor! che sangue! Oh! qual ti veggio
Formosissima donna! Lo chiedo al cielo
E al mondo: dite, dite
Chi la ridusse a tale? E questo è peggio,
Che di catene ha carche ambe le braccia;
Sì che sparte le chiome e senza velo
Siede in terra negletta e sconsolata;

Nascondendo la faccia
Tra le ginocchia, e piange.
Piangi, che ben hai donde, Italia mia,
Le genti a vincer nata
E nella fausta sorte e nella ria !'

And had he not been diminutive, and ridiculously ugly, he might have looked sublime.

Ercole had an object in view which he had embraced with tenacity. He was determined to force Flavio into the path which he desired him to pursue. He exaggerated the young Florentine's weakness, and yet the thought of triumphing over it was gratifying to his overweening conceit. Moreover, Horace had ridiculed him—without bitterness, for that was not in Lindsay's nature; but Ercole's vanity had been wounded to the quick. 'Injuries may be atoned for and forgiven, but insults admit of no compensation; they degrade the mind in its own esteem, and force it to recover its level by revenge.'*

By revenge alone could Ercole render himself formidable to Horace, and to be that became an object of desire. The sarcasm of the tongue, the 'cruel language of the eye,' he found quite ineffectual shafts; they fell around Horace, and he gave no signs of having felt their puncture. Like an irritated cobra de capello collects its deadly venom against the offender who has unconsciously bruised it under foot, so did Ercole resolve to give vent to his utmost malignity.

'Surely,' he cried to Flavio, as, entering the garden, they stood in the shade of the ilex trees;

* Junius.

'surely, if you were now to see that fair faced Englishman approaching you, you would have very different sensations from those with which you sauntered at his side on the Lungarno?'

'Different!' repeated Flavio. 'Alas, no! I am as miserable and as unreconciled to my misery as ever.'

'Bah!' exclaimed Ercole, with contempt. 'You do not, in my belief, know what misery is. When I see a captive hug his chains, am I to believe that he loathes them? What I mean is, that you cannot have breathed our Roman air wholly in vain. Why, our very women know how to avenge themselves. Turn your eyes to yon portico of the Academy. Last year, just before I came to Florence, who sought shelter there? Who asked and found a sanctuary? The magnificent Celeste, whose beauty modern art has immortalised. She snatched her spillone from her hair, to bury it in the breast of a woman who had dared to exasperate her, and—'

'Killed her!' interrupted Flavio, with horror.

'Not exactly,' replied Ercole, reluctant to descend so far from his flight of heroism, as to acknowledge that the offender had survived the wound.

'The blow did not prove deadly. Celeste concealed herself while the result was uncertain, receiving daily reports of the state of the wounded woman. The police were baffled. When the danger was over, Celeste issued forth.'

'Celeste!' repeated Flavio, in a tone of honest disgust. 'Little did she deserve the name.'

Ercole had the wit to perceive, that he had not kindled one spark of mischief yet. He desisted for the moment, but he failed not to seize others which

he esteemed favourable. Still he made little progress. Flavio was not by nature bold or sanguinary, and he had considerable candour. He remembered but too well the coldness of Beatrice before she had ever known Horace, and could not believe that his rival was the sole obstacle to his happiness; and therefore did not feel any very vehement desire to remove him. But Ercole had resolved to be an hero, he cared not in whose service, nor at whose expense. He conjured up a plot which he dimly communicated to another friend, who was so much struck by its beauty, that he resolved immediately to write a tragedy on it. It afforded the finest and most novel situations possible, he thought, and the story was 'stesa,' as Alfieri terms it, on paper almost as soon as sketched on the brain of Ercole, and was completed by a catastrophe which that youth did not at all contemplate as the inevitable and only suitable finale. He was resolved to do for Flavio what he could not urge Flavio to do for himself. It would be an heroic act of friendship; but he did not mean to pay for it with his life. It was much further recommended to him as an act of revenge also, for the provocation which he had himself received.

Meanwhile, Horace Lindsay, unsuspicious of evil, scarcely conscious that he had ever exasperated Ercole, and bestowing no further thought on Flavio than the passing one which made him determine to disregard the injunction of Oreste to seek out his son, knowing that it would give the boy no pleasure to be found by him, wandered here and there through Rome, absorbed in the inexhaustible interests of the place. One night he was descending the steps of

the Piazza di Spagna, to return to his lodgings in their vicinity. The moon was travelling amid the blackest clouds, and, occasionally bursting through them, brought out every object in strong relief. At this moment, the rays fell on a short figure enveloped in a cloak, concealing the face. Horace could almost have fancied that he was the peculiar object of the man's attention, and that he harboured no friendly design. At this period of festivity, the spirit of licence appeared to know little restraint; but fearless and thoughtless of danger unfamiliar to Englishmen, Horace lost sight of the idea almost at the same moment in which it occurred to him; and proceeded to carry out another which had seized his fancy. He sprang up the steps again, believing that the moon would soon emerge from the clouds, and bathe the whole scene in light and loveliness, which he determined to behold. But as he moved forward under the yet prevailing darkness, he felt a blow suddenly inflicted on him. The assassin had struck him from behind, passing the knife over his shoulder. Horace tried to turn and seize him; then, staggering, fell; and the villain rifled him of his gold before he fled.

CHAPTER LX.

This hand of mine
Is yet a maiden and an innocent hand,
Not painted with the crimson spots of blood.
Within this bosom never entered yet
The dreadful motion of a murderous thought.

KING JOHN.

AS the morning sun broke in on Flavio and woke him, he perceived a roll of paper lying at the foot of his bed, with a stone tied to it. Enough had passed of late betwixt him and Ercole to fill his mind with suspicions, and to prepare him for the wildest exploits at this time of maddening revelry. But his companion had never been so really off his guard as to betray what he knew would make Flavio recoil in abhorrence, that, proceeding from extravagance to crime, he was linked with the basest, as well as the fiercest spirits of the city; and had begun to regard plunder as a means of subsistence. Flavio, little as he suspected the extent of Ercole's vileness, shrank from learning what the scroll might reveal; at length, shaking off his repugnance, he snatched up the roll, and opening it, read:

'It is done, and I am off to a place of safety. Inform yourself of whatever takes place, and be

in readiness to give me information when I need it. No suspicion will fall on you. I alone am responsible.'

Flavio stared in silent horror on the scroll; then sprang to his feet.

'Ercole is mad—quite mad. This blood will be upon me; there is none on my hands, è vero—but is there none on my heart? His ravings put me beside myself. There were moments when I desired my rival's death. Now I would die to restore him to life! Oh! Beatrice! Oh! my mother!'

Dressing with the utmost speed, Flavio issued forth, resolved to encounter danger which, in spite of Ercole's assurance, he believed to dog his steps. His excited imagination pictured him to himself with the word 'murderer' traced in blood on his brow. Yet he passed on unheeded. One only remark did his haggard appearance provoke: 'You look sufficiently stracco by the follies of this week. A mouthful of morning air will do you no harm.'

'Morning air,' thought Flavio. 'Tis too pure a draught for one who has almost tasted blood!'

But where was the crowd he expected to see—where the hum of excitement—where the search for the culprit? Men were lounging as idly, pursuing their affairs as steadily, as if nothing strange or terrible had happened in the city. Then the thought pressed heavily on Flavio that he who had been smitten was but a poor, friendless foreigner who fell uncared for. The utter barbarity and baseness of the deed seemed to burst upon him. 'Vergogna! vergogna!' he muttered, gnashing his teeth.

Half way up the steps of the Piazza di Spagna he saw a dark, clotted stain on the ground, and a few idlers smoking near it. One said to another: 'That is where an Englishman was picked up last night—stabbed, eh?'

'Yes, yes; per Bacco.'

'For what cause?'

'Oh! a fit of jealousy, I suppose. These dog-days madden men, when feste come too.'

'Dead?'

'Of course. None would be such a fool as to strike to no purpose.'

Flavio, sickening to faintness, could scarcely prevent himself from falling.

'Dead, my friends?—No such thing,' cried a fresh speaker. 'He was picked up by some of his countrymen and carried off. I have no doubt the affair will prove an awkward one. Englishmen don't choose to be stabbed.'

'Not dead!' exclaimed Flavio, darting towards the speaker. 'Not dead! Blessed be Heaven! Where can I seek him? Tell me more—more—'

The man shook off the boy's passionate grasp.

'Why, what is this to thee, my child?'

'Everything—everything. Tell me where he is, that I may go to him—serve him like his slave.'

The man smiled, not without interest and compassion:

'I know nought of him, my boy. Go down into the Piazza. The foreigners congregate there. You can easily learn more.'

Flavio took the hint, and darted down the steps. The men looked at each other.

'The Englishman was young and handsome,' said one.

'And the boy?'

'Oh! it is a woman in disguise. Did you not see how he trembled, and turned pale at the talk of blood?'

'Stuff!' said another individual, who had hitherto smoked his pipe in silent grandeur. 'The Englishman was a political emissary; therefore was he struck.'

Flavio, at the entrance of an hôtel, obtained from a courier answers to all the questions he asked, except as to the Englishman's name, but of that he had no doubt. He mounted the stairs of the Palazzo,—the Englishman lodged at the top of it. He rang gently. His heart beat so violently that he leant against the wall as he waited for the summons to be obeyed. A woman opened the door.

'Chut!' she said. 'No one enters here to-day.'

'Is he dying?'

'Chi sa!' she replied, mysteriously.

'I must see him—I will wait on him—'

'He has friends.'

'I must crawl to the foot of his bed if it be but for a moment!'

'Who is there?' cried a voice, certainly not in dying accents.

Flavio darted under the woman's arm, and was instantly on his knees beside the bed on which lay Horace, pale, and languid enough, in spite of his power of momentary exertion, and his eyes appearing of an unnatural darkness.

'Flavio—my friend—is it you?' he asked, with feeble surprise.

'Sì, sì, signore. Let me stay with you—let me nurse you; you must not die! Think of her tears—'

He bent down his head, and burst into a passionate flood of grief. Horace placed his hand on the boy's golden curls:

'I am very glad to see you. My wound is a mere trifle now; there was poison in it when I fancied that—for the sake of your father, your mother—I could not bear the thought: it is all right now—' But Horace fainted.

'Mariuccia, what is this? Have you dared!' exclaimed a voice in purely English accents, drowned by the overwhelming reproaches of the Roman surgeon.

'He slipped in like an eel,' was the sum of Mariuccia's defence. The sole argument employed by Stormont, to put an end to the intrusion, was to pick up the stripling in his muscular arms, to place him at once outside the door, and to close it upon him.

Flavio seated himself on the stair, sobbing with anger, shame, and sorrow, and there awaited the Doctor.

'What is this?' asked Horace, opening his eyes, after the application of various remedies had recalled him to his senses. 'Where is Flavio?'

'There was a boy, whom I tumbled out of the room,' replied Stormont. 'The young rascal was the cause of your fainting.'

'Oh! let him in again; he will do me good,' said Horace, smiling.

'Nothing will do you good, signore, but perfect quiet,' observed the doctor; 'and with that there is no room for fear.'

When the surgeon departed, Stormont followed him:

'You are clear there is no danger?'

'Quite. The blow must have been struck from behind by one too short to reach far enough to give it effect.'

As Stormont opened the door, Flavio was discovered. 'You here still?' cried Stormont, with affected roughness. 'Why, what would you have?'

The boy, at the sound of the turning of the lock, had raised his head, and, fixing his eager eyes on the surgeon, he exclaimed:

'He lives; he will live?'

'Surely, surely,' replied the surgeon.

'And why may I not watch by him? Does he forbid it?'

'You?' asked the surgeon. 'Are you known to him?'

'Oh! yes—'

'Do you love him?'

The boy hesitated for a moment, then answered:

'I value his life a thousand times more than my own.'

'I don't understand this mode of expression,' said Stormont. 'There, there—if you will be quiet and discreet—and as he asked for you—eh, Doctor?'

'Let him enter on these conditions, and no other,' replied the surgeon, with authority.

'I will be obedient in the smallest particular,' was Flavio's earnest rejoinder. He was true to his

promised submission,—equally true to his professed devotion. Day and night he passed at Horace's side, and for forty-eight hours watched uninterruptedly till an attack of fever had subsided, with a patience and tenderness which Maddalena herself could not have exceeded. More than once did he hear the name of Beatrice escape the sufferer's lips.

'The worst is over now,' said Stormont, one morning, when he had, with much satisfaction, brought Lindsay into the sitting-room, and established him on a couch near the open window.

'Yes, and you ought to have started for Naples—a week ago,' replied Horace.

'No, no,' returned Stormont, irresolutely; then he added—'the truth is, Lindsay, I am a downright Englishman, nothing more: there is a mystery about that boy I can't solve, and I don't like leaving you with him.'

'Absurd, my dear fellow! He is the son of a painter at Florence, whom I know perfectly well. In more ways than one the threads of our lives have been twisted together.'

Lindsay's acquaintance with Stormont was slight. They had come to Rome together. The latter was on his way to Naples, and when his companion was injured, had shown him much friendly consideration, relinquishing his own schemes to attend to Horace's welfare. Horace was grateful, but not quite prepared to disclose to him his own secrets, nor Flavio's.

'I don't love these fellows,' said Stormont, stubbornly; 'nor should you, just struck down by the hand of an assassin.'

'My good friend, go out, amuse yourself, and do not brood over my wrongs.'

Stormont sallied forth for a stroll, and immediately afterwards Flavio entering, placed himself beside Horace.

'What have you done with Ercole?' asked Horace. 'He does not come to see me.'

Flavio started, then replied, with rapidity:

'I know not where Ercole is. One reason why I love to be here is, that then I see him not.'

'Once you loved his society far better than mine.'

'I have learned that he did me nothing but harm, while to be with you does me nothing but good.'

'Indeed! Flavio. I shall tell that to Maddalena.'

'You may,' replied the boy, with a flushed cheek. 'You may tell her that love for you has purified her son. Once, signore, I hated, now I love you.'

'What worked this strange revulsion of feeling? I suspected your hate. I confide in your love. Tell me the history of both.'

Flavio complied. Seated near Horace, yet purposely a little removed from his sight, he described rapidly his leave-taking with Beatrice on San Miniato.

'Her words that we were both children rang in my ears. I strove to give them a meaning which all the while my heart told me they never possessed. I heard of her, and knew that she had ceased to be a child, and was I to remain one? No, no; she will return, and shall find me a man, I said; but not so You came instead, and revealed that she was lost to me utterly.' He bent down his head, and sobbed.

'My poor Flavio!'

'Eh!—non compiangermi—that I cannot bear. I hated you. I resented the kindness which my parents lavished on you. Ought they to fondle one who was destroying their child? Yet I could not do you the injustice to assert that you had robbed me of that which I never, never possessed.'

'Nor could you design my death?' cried Horace, laying his hand on Flavio's arm.

'Never. Dio lo sa! I heard of your fall,' continued Flavio, after a pause; 'from that moment I thought but of her woe. Eternal remorse would have been mine had I struck or directed the blow. I flew to your side. The surgeon asked me if I loved you. I felt that 'yes' would have stuck here like a lie' (he passed his hand round his throat as he spoke). 'I did not love you then, but now I do. God has put love into my heart as I have watched here, and no anguish shall destroy it.'

He raised the hand of Horace to his lips. Horace drew the boy towards him, and said, in a tone of emotion:

'You shall be to me as her brother, Flavio!'

At this moment Stormont's step was heard.

'I have made up my mind,' he said, as he entered. 'I stay here till I have seen you off to Florence.'

'Then I must go, well or ill,' replied Horace, with a languid smile.

'Why so? Do as you would be done by—that is the golden rule. Besides, I have ascertained this morning that it would be a sin to quit Rome yet. I shall have to thank you for giving me the

leisure to acquaint myself duly with the Eternal City.'

Eight days after this conversation, Stormont accompanied his friend and Flavio (who had written to his father, imploring leave to quit Rome,) to the Porta del Popolo, to see them take their departure for Florence. The calèche was delayed for a few minutes at the gate, to allow of the entrance of a cart, guarded by soldiers, and filled with prisoners to be conveyed to the Castle of St. Angelo. As it passed in, one, a youth, giving a violent start, bent forward with a look of ferocity, extending his hand as far as fetters would allow him, and, shaking his forefinger at Horace and Flavio, hissed out the word 'Poltroni!'

'Ha!' cried Stormont, 'what a young savage is there!'

'Silence,' whispered Horace, pressing Flavio's arm. 'We will not betray the young fool.' And turning away, he asked a Doganiere who stood near, what was the nature of the crime for which these men were in custody?

'They are part of a horde of thieves who have been troublesome lately. We shall have the rest of them before long, I trust,' was the answer.

Horace was glad to get out of Rome, for he suspected his abode there might have caused a heavier charge than that of robbery to be brought against Ercole. As to Flavio, he could not breathe freely till at least three stages of their journey were completed.

On arriving in Florence, Horace found a letter

awaiting him from Maxwell. He enclosed one to Sir Roderic, whom he knew not where to find, and communicated the tenor of it to Horace, for he wished the uncle and the nephew to be alike acquainted with the fact that mines of great value had been discovered on the Duror estate. In consideration that an earlier discovery of them would have enabled the Lindsays to preserve their possessions, Maxwell offered to accept the payment of the large sums owing to him from the produce of the mines, and to restore the estates themselves into the hands of the Lindsays, as soon as the debt to him should be liquidated. To this offer he appended a condition, that Sir Roderic should consider himself to have only a life interest in the property, and should entail it strictly on his nephew.

'This is Judith's doing,' exclaimed Horace to Anne. 'This is what her generous compassion and prompt wit have devised. She has striven to satisfy her father and to reinstate us. I know this well, more especially by that last act of favour to me. How could she wring so much forgiveness from him? I fancy he has found his position, attained with dishonour, productive of very little gratification. I must send this to my uncle. He knows best what his transactions with Maxwell have been, and therefore what it befits him now to do. I will offer no suggestion whatever.'

'Oh! there can be no doubt as to what he will do,' replied Anne.

'Perhaps not,' said Horace, after a pause. 'I cannot think that Maxwell deserves more than the

payment of the money he had actually hazarded the loss of, and any usurer's interest he may choose to add.'

Sir Roderic answered this letter with the least possible delay, and the utmost cordiality. He was neither too proud to accept from Maxwell, nor too resentful to yield to his nephew. Horace's next act was to write to Beatrice, and tell her all that had passed. 'I am again heir of Duror, and here is the downfal of your castles in air, my generous Beatrice; you, 'plus belle que fée,' have revelled in the idea of lavishing gifts also in the style of a beneficent fairy, and so you shall; but here is an end of your idea of enriching me by your efforts—a thought I never knew how to brook; and now you see I scarcely need my own. Come, then, to your grandfather, for he can never leave Florence while Mr. Howard so much needs his care, and come with the least possible delay, for I must tell you, that I am shocked to perceive the difference which, even during my absence, has taken place in your friend. Let the sight of you cheer and bless him. I believe that Anne's presence here has been invaluable; she is at once so calm and so sympathizing. I do not doubt but that in these last days he has confided to her thoughts and feelings which would never otherwise have been spoken to human ear. What a salutary relief to him! But I can see that his heart yearns for his Beatrice—and mine. Beatrice, will you not come?'

To this Anne added: 'Come, dearest Beatrice.'

In his letters to Beatrice, Horace had dwelt very

little on the nature of his accident in Rome, and much on Flavio's devotion. That youth, when he heard that the arrival of Beatrice was probable, had the fortitude voluntarily to set out to Siena, to prosecute his studies there under better auspices than in Rome.

Now, if there be any who would know the history of these strange revolutions at Duror, they must be content to direct their steps thither.

CHAPTER LXI.

Let wit and all her studied plots project
The best they can;
Let smiling fortune prosper, and effect
What wit began;
Let earth advise with both, and so perfect
A happy man;
Let wit and fawning fortune vie their best;
He may be blest
With all that earth can give, but earth can give no rest.
QUARLES.

FROM the time that Judith relinquished all hopes of prevailing with her father to forsake the line of conduct he had pursued, at the expense of health, credit, and happiness to him and to her, her own good sense and the counsels of her only intimate friends, Mr. Douglas and Miss Evelyn, induced her to accommodate herself to her present position; however unwillingly she occupied it, it was no other than that of the daughter of the proprietor of Duror. Conquering the pain, enduring the smart, she set herself to the consideration of her duties, and gave time and thought to the advancement of the welfare of her father's dependents. From this conduct Maxwell evidently derived satisfaction, and began to

restore to her some measure of his former confidence. This, under any circumstances, was, in a degree, acceptable to Judith, who regained energy, if not cheerfulness; the last would have been held in check by the gradual decline of her father's health, had no other cause of anxiety existed, and by those alternations of irritability and gloom to which Maxwell was now subject. These moods obliged her often to keep back for a convenient season details of business, and sometimes to decide on and execute measures of different degrees of importance.

It was in the spring, when her father laid half his maladies to the charge of the inconstancy of the season, that Judith was one day informed that Campbell (the man whom Maxwell had made his agent) wished to see her.

'How is the Laird?' asked Campbell, with suitable respect.

'Too ill to see you to-day, I fear,' replied Judith.

'Why, Miss Maxwell, I have business to talk about, of rather an exciting nature; therefore, it is just as well that I should speak to you first.'

Judith now had always a nervous anticipation of evil; but she looked resigned.

'You know Meredith's farm, Miss Maxwell?'

'Perfectly.'

'Well, my intelligence is both important and agreeable. I have sufficient reason to believe that we have discovered a vein of copper ore, of great value, on it. I have been hard at it for several days before I would come up here. If Mr. Maxwell makes up his mind to work it, which of course he

will do, for he has ready money at command, it will increase the value of the estate tenfold—a hundredfold.'

Campbell was an enterprising, speculative man, and his eyes brightened at the anticipation.

'It will take a great deal of ready money to work it?' asked Judith, with an air of thought rather than of elation.

'Undoubtedly; but your father has it.'

'And the Lindsays had it not,' thought Judith.

'If this had been known six months ago—' she began.

'Why, the estate would have fetched treble what was bid for it,' answered Campbell.

'And the Lindsays might have paid their debt, and kept their land,' again reflected Judith.

'Prodigious luck in the thing!' muttered Campbell to himself.

'Well, Mr. Campbell, will you acquire all useful information, form all advisable plans, and I will communicate the present facts to my father, as I find him able to listen to me.'

After Campbell's departure, Judith considered long and deeply; her face gradually grew serene, her eyes sparkled as they used to do, she rose more than once from her seat and paced the room, then approached the window, and looked out on the landscape with an expression of delight with which it had long failed to inspire her.

'And all this may again be the Lindsays'!' she exclaimed; 'and my father's name once more honoured—uttered with gratitude.' She clasped her

hands, and glad tears streamed down her cheeks. She saw Mr. Douglas walking along the terrace; she went to the door, and opened it for him herself.

'Is this a good day with your father?' were his first words.

'Scarcely that,' replied Judith, thrown back on sorrowful remembrances.

'I am disappointed, then,' said Mr. Douglas. 'Your coming to meet me—my first look at your face—'

'Made you think otherwise,' interrupted Judith. 'My dear friend, whom kindness makes in all things observant, I am happier to-day than I have long been; happier than I ever expected again to be. But do not ask me why I am so altered. My hopes may evaporate like the morning dew.'

'I will *ask* nothing, Judith.'

'Thanks—thanks. You know how willing I am to tell you all.'

'Do you think your father will see me?'

'I hope so. I will go to him.'

Judith returned with a welcome from Maxwell.

Mr. Douglas stayed with him longer than usual; and as Judith walked to the end of the terrace, he told her that he had thought her father more softened than hitherto. This gave Judith great satisfaction. She returned to his chamber, resolved to avail herself of the first favourable opportunity of communicating to him Campbell's information, and what was to her quick mind an already mature project. That both should be brought before him as nearly as possible at the same moment she was

very desirous. It struck her when she entered, and placed herself in the window in the remaining light of day, where her father was both seen by and could see her, that he regarded her with a more tender expression than common. She began to speak:

'Mr. Campbell, father, had just left me when Mr. Douglas came in. No—I am not saying the truth; he must have left me for an hour, I am sure. The reason I mistake the matter is, that what he told me so completely engaged my mind, as to render me quite insensible how time went.'

'What could he have to say that was so very interesting, Judith? Some piece of domestic history among the tenants?'

'No, father; it entirely concerned ourselves,' replied Judith.

'I suppose it would interest me equally.'

'Certainly. May I repeat it to you?' She came nearer to him.

'Well, now that you have excited my curiosity, I think you must gratify it; otherwise, I would rather not have had my mind disturbed just now.' He spoke so gently, ending with a sigh, that Judith regarded him for a moment with astonishment. Then, with the utmost tenderness of manner, she replied:

'There is not the slightest necessity, dearest father, for speaking to you immediately.'

'Yes, yes—you may as well go on; the current of thought is already changed.'

He raised his hand to his head with an air of distress. Judith was grieved, yet saw it was too

late to draw back; therefore, summoning up all her self-command, though inwardly she trembled, and with difficulty regulated her voice, she began:

'Campbell tells me that he has made discoveries very much to the advantage of the estate. You know Meredith's farm—'

Her father's countenance at these observations assumed an expression so peculiar as to startle Judith, and never to be forgotten by her. There was in it an indescribable mixture of shame, fear, and cunning; his change of colour, too, frightened her; she would have recalled her words, if possible, but it was not; and he motioned to her to go on.

'He says he is certain that mines to a considerable extent are existing there. He would not speak to us—would not harass us with conjectures, while you were so ill; he resolved to put the matter beyond a doubt, and he has done so; and now, if you will make a sufficient outlay to work them, he is convinced that you will be amply repaid. He has made many calculations,—formed plans. I have them all on paper. I have not bestowed very great attention on them as yet. Campbell seems quite in his element; though enthusiastic, I cannot believe him to be visionary. We have had reason, hitherto, to consider him a very practical man, have we not?'

'We have. Moreover, I am inclined to believe that what he says may possibly be well founded—that is, there is no reason against it, I mean. Has he told you what originally turned his attention in that direction?'

The first part of this sentence was embarrassed, the last inquiry eager.

'He has told me scarcely anything beyond the fact,' replied Judith, 'and dwelt on nothing but the consequences of it. Those were of such absorbing interest, that I have thought of little else.'

It was her father's turn to be astonished. This vast increase of wealth, then, had power to dazzle Judith? It afforded a princely contemplation, certainly; and it did not lower his daughter in Maxwell's estimation, to perceive that she was charmed by it. He smiled.

'You look as if this ore were so much gold, Judith?'

'Well, father, it will be.'

'And you have been forming magnificent projects for lavishing it with both hands.'

It was so rarely that her father jested with her, that Judith forced a smile to her lips to welcome his raillery. Her heart beat, meanwhile, as if it must make itself a way to escape; she pressed her hand upon it. She rose, came close to Maxwell, placed herself beside him, and said:

'I have formed projects—magnificent projects, if you will; such as I rejoice to form, and bless God for putting it into our power to execute. And you will execute them, dearest father; you will lift from your own spirit and your child's the crushing weight that bears both down. We will cast it off, and mount up to Heaven's gate to render thanks that we are relieved of it. I know this will be so. Give me a patient hearing while I tell you what are the consequences of this discovery which I anticipate.

'Supposing that these mines had been discovered in the Lindsays' time?—'

Her father started as though an adder had bitten him. He gazed wildly in Judith's face, but read no reproach there. He sank back in his chair, and murmured:

'They were beggars. They could not have worked the mines had they discovered them.'

'They could; they could have borrowed money to do so. You would have lent it to them. By enriching them you would have repaid yourself all that Sir Roderic's extravagance had squandered. This is my meaning. I have left off asking you to injure yourself—to forego one sixpence that the law gives you. I have thought it my duty to desist from urging you farther, and I have long been silent. But now all is different; and I do implore you, father, for your own dear sake, for which I would deem any sacrifice cheap, for the sake of the sole inheritance I covet from you—an unspotted name, to consider the proposal I set before you. Work these mines with your own money; work them till you shall have repaid yourself all they cost you, and the original debt owing to you. Take all the strictest creditor could exact, and then give back Duror—to which a curse seems to have cleaved, as far as we have been connected with it, for not a day of health or happiness have we enjoyed here—to the Lindsays. Let them have the land of their forefathers again; and let men, speaking of John Maxwell, say, that if anger and ambition blinded him for a season, he did what few living do—abjured his errors and repaired them.

'Oh! my dear father, how will my whole heart

love and bless you—how will God accept you, to Whom you are going, if you will listen to me.'

Judith bent down her face on her father's knees, and wept. Maxwell sat there, a strangely-tempted man.

'Her love, her blessing, I may win! her respect I may recover! Her generous spirit will rejoice, if I but throw this course open to her, and she will go on her way scattering benefits on all around her. I shall abundantly repair the injury I have inflicted on the Lindsays, for they have deserved to suffer, the uncle for his profligacy, the nephew for his rejection of this noble creature! I shall make restitution—but not confession. Her love and reverence I may attain to, but shall I win acceptance with God? I shall recover a fair character with the world. As she says, I shall be cited as having done as few would do. But oh! the gnawing of remorse which I have borne long in secret and in silence, will this be put an end to? Yet can I reveal to my child how much lower I sank than she has even suspected? If ever, now—now, this moment.

'No—neither now—nor ever.

'For her sake shall my lips be sealed? How, if I confess, can I yield to her all she asks, all she values—a name free from dishonour? I will not pierce her heart thus deeply in these, my last days!'

Maxwell knew they were his last days, those which were gliding so swiftly from him.

'I will bless her by secrecy as I could once have blessed her openly. I will leave her in ignorance of that which would destroy her happiness; and the

sole favour I will ask of Heaven is, that my lips may be sealed in hours of wandering and of anguish.'

In muteness sat he, while he wrestled thus with his mortal agony. His child knew not of his struggle; she who would have ranged herself at his side to fight off the dark fiends who assailed him—who would never have proffered one harsh reproach to any human being confessing with true contrition sins of however deep a dye—who would have wept for him, pleaded for him with her God and his; and had all the world risen against him to vituperate, would have maintained faith and love unshaken and unwearied; and, accompanying him through the darkest passes of the valley of the shadow of death, would have pointed to Him upon the Cross, and whispered in that low voice which should have penetrated his ear, despite the fiercest din of foe without and fiend within: 'He will forgive,'—she was deceived. Maxwell threw not himself on God's mercy, nor on hers. His hands had been clenched in agony whilst he deliberated; but now he was resolved, and he allowed them to fall on her head. There was something in their touch which conveyed hope into Judith's soul, and she looked up, her face radiant with joy. Maxwell bent over her, and kissed her brow. She clasped him round the neck, and wept on his bosom, as she had never wept there before.

Not another word did the father and daughter exchange that evening on this subject, but Judith knew he had acceded to her request. When she wished him good-night, she whispered fondly:

'Give me your blessing, father, for surely our hearts overflow with love.'

Maxwell seemed to shrink from words by which Judith meant to impart some of her own happiness to him. He did not, however, refuse a brief compliance with her request.

CHAPTER LXII.

> And I have no perplexity or cloud
> Upon my vision.
>
> P. Van Artevelde.

THE change which had taken place in Judith's appearance and demeanour when she came to greet her father in the morning, had not been anticipated by him. The mirth of her girlhood before a shadow had darkened it could not indeed return; but there was something yet more cheering and more enlightening in the tempered brightness now restored to her countenance; and indescribably touching was the mournful tenderness underneath her joy, inspired by the conviction of the serious nature of her father's malady, and the idea that the good deed he was about to perform was the last ray of glory of a setting sun, too long obscured in cloud and storm.

Maxwell showed a feverish impatience to accomplish all that his daughter desired. Campbell was summoned; an engineer was written to that very day, in an incredibly short time every arrangement was made for the commencement of the work, and commenced it was, most prosperously. The whole talk of the country was of the prodigious good luck

of that crafty fellow, Maxwell, and the prodigious ill luck of that poor spendthrift, Sir Roderic, who had, in the bowels of his own land, the means to free himself from all his difficulties, and ignorantly parted with those means to such a shark as his agent had proved.

Until it was an established point that the mines, when worked, would answer the sanguine expectations of Campbell, Judith considered herself bound in honour not to urge her father to declare the designs he had consented to entertain on that condition. Such an assent was all she had sought. At times it seemed to her a very trifling one, ill deserving the praise of generosity; but still it was all he had accorded, and she would not act towards him as if she had a right to claim any other. Nor would she reveal his intention, until he set her at liberty to do so, let who would wonder at her beaming eye and elastic step, compared with her downcast looks and dejected mien of a few weeks since. She said to Mr. Douglas and to Miss Evelyn:

'I am very happy—(ah! if my father could be well, my joy would be complete!)—but the secret of my happiness I must keep for a while, glad as I would be to declare it.'

Miss Evelyn, with a little dissatisfaction, repeated inwardly: 'Guildford then has not a thought?'

Had she asked this question of Judith instead of herself, perhaps she might have obtained an answer not so displeasing to her.

At length the day came which set Judith free to go down to the English cottage, and say to Miss Evelyn:

'This morning I wrote in my father's name to Sir Roderic Lindsay.' She paused; but Miss Evelyn, totally in the dark as to her meaning, could not help her forward, and recovering herself, she continued in a tremulous voice:

'My father wished to acquaint him with these grand discoveries, more interesting to him than to any other person concerned in them. My father has undertaken to work the mines—none but himself could have done so. As soon as by their means the debt owing to him is discharged, he is resolved to restore Duror to the Lindsays.'

'My dear Judith,' cried Miss Evelyn, raising herself, and holding out her hand; 'this is the secret of your happiness; this is your doing!'

'It is the secret of my happiness; it is my father's doing,' replied Judith, laying her trembling hand in that of her friend.

'And you are contented!'

'No,' said Judith, with a touch of mournfulness; 'no, but it is better, it is more—' She paused in confusion.

'I meant, are you contented to strip yourself of Duror?'

Judith looked indignant and surprised.

'My noble child, I know you are. I know the relief this is to you!'

'Then can you wonder that I covet relief? that I thank Heaven for it?'

'No, indeed! I am heartily thankful that it is granted to you.'

'One thing more will you be pleased to hear,' said Judith. 'My father has made the stipulation,

that Sir Roderic shall strictly entail the estate on his nephew, as soon as it shall be restored to him.'

'I should have liked it to have been given to Horace himself at once,' replied Miss Evelyn, with a smile.

To Mr. Douglas, Judith, when informing him of these facts, added reverently:

'This amended state of mind—how much of it may be owing to you! The very day I made my last appeal to my father, was that on which you told me that you had left him in a softened mood.'

Miss Evelyn had been faithful to her promise to her cousin, Arthur Guildford, to inform him of every change which related to Judith Maxwell. She wrote fully by the next post the wonderful history she had now heard, and her last significant words were:

'So Judith Maxwell is no longer the heiress of Duror. This will soon cease to be a secret.'

Colonel Guildford, on receiving this letter, started at once for Duror.

Judith, when she visited the cottage, was accustomed to open the door and enter, if she received any token of recognition from the window; if that were wanting, she commonly rang the bell to make inquiries, before proceeding further. It chanced that scarcely an hour after Guildford's arrival, she turned her steps thither. There was some unusual appearance that struck her, though she knew not what, and made her pause on the threshold. Marion, the little maid, came to meet her.

'Colonel Guildford is just come, Miss,' she said.

Judith drew back, but it was too late for retreat,

for Marion had opened the door of the sitting room, and Guildford was there to welcome her. Her cheeks glowed; he was delighted to see the bloom of health on them, but in a moment it had faded away into extreme paleness; and Judith, withdrawing her hand hastily from his, seemed wholly engrossed by her interest in Miss Evelyn's report of her health of that day. But Miss Evelyn found little difficulty in turning the conversation to the arrival of her cousin; and when Judith departed, Guildford accompanied her at least as far as the Castle-gate. There he paused, for he scrupled to proceed further, unacquainted with and uninvited by its Laird.

During Maxwell's sudden and alarming illness, Guildford had daily made inquiries concerning him and his daughter; but now that he was sufficiently restored to hold intercourse with his neighbours, he hesitated to enter into the domestic circle. Judith recognised and appreciated this delicacy, and walked onward alone, considering how she should acquaint her father with Colonel Guildford's return; the name was not wholly strange to his ears, although she had, she knew not why, been very sparing in her mention of it. Mr. Douglas had often spoken in terms of commendation of Miss Evelyn's relative, and it was no small relief to Judith to find him with her father when she entered. It cost little to say:

'I have just returned from the cottage, and I found Miss Evelyn's cousin, Colonel Guildford, there. Did you know of his arrival, Mr. Douglas?'

'No, indeed; I hope his re-appearance does not betoken a speedy departure for India. He always

said he should pay Miss Evelyn another visit before he sailed.'

'He has still leave of absence for a year-and-a-half,' replied Judith.

'I wish he may bestow much of that time on us,' said Mr. Douglas. 'I do not know a more delightful companion than Colonel Guildford; full of spirit and information, with a modesty and simplicity of character which are among the finest characteristics of true manliness. My dear sir, you must make his acquaintance. You will owe many an agreeable hour to his conversation, I assure you.'

'I cannot call on any one now,' returned Maxwell, feebly; 'but if he will dispense with ceremony, and you like to bring him here as Miss Evelyn's relative, he shall receive all the welcome I have to give.'

CHAPTER LXIII.

My heart's subdued
Even to the very quality of my lord,
And to his honour and his valiant parts
Do I my soul and fortunes consecrate.
OTHELLO.

For God hath given to me a mind,
The which to thee shall prove as kind
As any one that thou shalt find
Of high or low degree.
FAIR ELLEN. *Ballad.*

'I AM afraid Colonel Guildford came here almost as much for Judith's sake as for Miss Evelyn's,' said Maxwell to Mr. Douglas, with a melancholy smile, as from the library window they watched the two of whom he spoke standing beside each other on the terrace.

'Well—I don't know,' was Mr. Douglas's most prudent reply. Maxwell, after a few minutes' thoughtfulness, added:

'I shall soon be in my grave; a hindrance to no one's happiness.'

'Surely, surely, my good friend,' cried Mr. Douglas, with the warmth natural to one possessed of feelings kindly as his, 'it would materially contribute to

your own to entrust Judith's welfare to the care of one every way worthy of her.'

Maxwell made no answer. Often as he had repulsed Judith's tenderness, alienated from her as at one time he had seemed to be by vindictiveness, he felt at that moment he grudged any man her heart.

Judith and Guildford had been gazing with much delight on the closing beauties of the day; lake, mountain, wood, lay before them, glowing in the beams of glory. Guildford followed Judith's eye to a spot on which it seemed to linger with a peculiar expression of interest and affection; it was the Heronry.

'Your former home,' he said, 'and you loved it!'

'With all my heart,' replied Judith, drawing a deep breath. 'Youth and happiness belonged to me there.'

'One, certainly, yet abides with you. Do not tell me that the other has departed,' said Guildford, tenderly.

'I have never felt young or happy since my father's first injury, as I did before it. A first sorrow is very terrible, and robs you of what no other sorrow finds to rob you of. The vivid sensations of youth and joy wither at its touch, and never recover their springtide verdure. But you called the Heronry my *former*, I call it my only home. This is not home.' She turned, and looked on the Castle in its stateliness.

'Do you know,' she asked, in a voice which slightly betrayed agitation, 'that my father has resolved to retain none of this?—that the Lindsays will return here, ere long?'

'I do know it,' said Guildford; 'I knew it before I returned.'

Judith felt that his words had a signification; her heart beat quickly.

'If that decision had not been made, I could not have revisited Duror at this time.'

'Why not?' asked Judith, suddenly raising her dark eyes to his face.

'Because,' said Guildford, 'it would have grieved me too much to see you mistress of it on terms which I thought unworthy of you.'

Judith moved on a few steps in silence, then cried, in a tone of playfulness:

'Duror will one day, I trust, have a mistress who will in every way do it honour. I do not believe that Mr. Lindsay's engagement to Miss Courtenay is any secret. I may assure you that there never was a more lovely or loveable person than Beatrice. Has not Miss Evelyn often spoken of her?'

'Yes, often. How much I should have liked to see you together.'

'That you might have marked the contrast?' asked Judith, laughing.

'Yes,' replied Guildford, with composure.

'I wish I could wave a wand and instate her and Mr. Lindsay here at once,' said Judith; and she seemed to fall into a reverie, leaving Guildford unable to guess whether it was past, present, or future which most engaged her thoughts. It was, in fact, on his own words that Judith pondered.

'He approves of my father's intentions; he respects him for them, sufficiently to make an admission to his house acceptable, which other-

wise he would not have desired; I perceive that plainly.'

Judith felt keenly Guildford's former condemnation of her father's conduct; but she was not, as some women might have been, displeased, incensed at the conviction, forced on her, that she could not have attracted him to Duror in spite of that condemnation. She believed that he had, for half a life, been accustomed never to regard anything as practicable which required any sacrifice of honour. She could remember, and apply to him, with a generous glow of approbation, her favourite lines:

> 'I could not love thee, dear, so well,
> Loved I not honour more.'

This conversation, as far as it had gone, did not dim the discernment which was dawning on her that Guildford did love her as she would be loved. The next words which he uttered brought her certainty of that fact.

'I have formed an idea of your character,' he began; 'nay, I would rather say I have a knowledge of it (for circumstances have rendered us known to each other), that encourages me to believe that you will see no contradiction between the avowal I have just made, that I could not have returned to find you heiress of Duror, and that which I now make, that it was only to seek you that I have returned. Had I arrived a year ago and found you there (he pointed to the Heronry), I never would have quitted the place without declaring the admiration — the love — which your noble nature from the first inspired. But I was struck dumb by

the sudden change in your position, unacceptable to you as it was to me. The illness, too, of your father made it impossible to approach you.

'Judith, I may now be too hasty—too presumptuous. The frank cordiality of your manner towards the relative of the friend you value may have helped to deceive me, but you will not find it difficult to convince me how unworthy I am of the prize I seek—one word will silence me—not one shall distress you; only your forgiveness—you will grant me that.'

But the one word that would silence, Judith did not utter; and Guildford knew that he did not stand in need of forgiveness.

'You know, Colonel Guildford,' at length said Judith, 'I can never quit my father.'

'I could not ask it.'

'Nor even agitate him by abruptly bringing forward questions likely to do so. You must leave all to me, and consider that you have no answer but that of my own heart, until he gives you one. My first object in life now is to be his dutiful child.'

The tears sprang into her eyes. Guildford spoke to her of the veneration with which he regarded her conduct as a daughter; but seeing that she was all too deeply moved, he added, with playfulness:

'But I cannot say this was my earliest feeling towards you, for it was not as a daughter that I first saw you.'

'Nonsense! At the Fergusons' you had no feeling at all.'

'Yes, I had; or why should I have disliked Rosa so much for having mentioned your name with that of Horace Lindsay?'

'Did she? spiteful girl!' cried Judith.

'Do you remember a walk we took with her?' said Guildford.

'Why, that was the second day?'

'It was; and my first question of Sybil related to the younger Lindsay.'

Judith blushed deeply. The humiliation to which her father had exposed her suddenly recurred to her mind, and she again felt it difficult to forgive. Guildford perceived that something painful occupied her thoughts, but this time she herself broke the silence, asking:

'And you would have relinquished me for ever—if—' She stopped.

'No,' replied Guildford, in a low voice, 'no; but until you were mistress of your own actions. Then I know every honourable, every generous impulse, would have been followed, and I should not have found you here.'

Judith stood still.

'Arthur Guildford,' she said, 'you understand me. The conduct of each has been, would have been, in unison with the sentiments of the other. This is enough. On this subject we need never—we had better never—speak again.'

CHAPTER LXIV.

I see a thing
Bitter to me as death.
CYMBELINE.

She felt a sudden, indeliberate thought,
Which strange conviction in her spirit wrought.
KEN.

MAXWELL, not more ignorant than others that his days could be but few, brought himself by degrees to regard with complacency the idea of an engagement between Colonel Guildford and his daughter. He began to speak of passing the coming winter in Italy, and of allowing the marriage to take place before they removed thither.

'If we could but transport Horace and Beatrice here in our stead!' exclaimed Judith; and she strove to devise with Mr. Douglas a mode of realizing this bright vision.

One day, when she was returning from the village alone, (for she had left Guildford to entertain her father in her absence,) her steps were intercepted by a man whose face she recognised with disquietude. It was Donaldson. She could not tell from his looks whether or not he had purposely crossed her path;

she did not wish him to read in her own, that to have met him caused her annoyance. She had not liked the man in former days, nor had he borne a fair character in the neighbourhood; but the ready intelligence with which he had assisted her to find her father, and to rescue him from peril, had bound her to him by ties of gratitude, and she would have welcomed him now had it not been for the remembrance which flashed across her mind, of the constant recurrence of his image to her father, as an object of aversion, if not of terror.

'I thought you were in America, Donaldson,' she said, striving to banish constraint from her manner.

'So I was, Miss Judith, three weeks ago; but even there the news reached me of all the strange changes which had come to pass here—placing you and the old master where you so well deserve to be.'

'Thank you, Donaldson,' replied Judith, coldly; 'thank you, for your good opinion. My father intends to reinstate Sir Roderic at Duror, as soon as that can be rightly effected.'

The man started.

'Impossible, Miss Judith! at least, if any but yourself told me so, I would say, impossible. As it is, I know John Maxwell too well not to be certain, that, whatever assurances he may give Sir Roderic and you too, a rat's hole will be found at last through which he will creep back into the Castle, and be laird of it again.'

'It is not easy to reconcile this language with the high respect you were just professing,' said Judith, at once astonished and offended.

'Why, Miss Judith, you see you threw me quite off my guard, as it were, by such a strange announcement. Only let me see Maxwell himself, for I came here on purpose to say a few words to him, and not even an intention like this will render them unnecessary.'

'It is quite impossible that you should see my father; he does no business himself now. You can see Campbell, if you please, the agent; or, if you like, you may speak to me.'

Judith's tone was one of great resolution; yet Donaldson listened with a short, scornful laugh.

'The agent, indeed! these are fine times. I shrewdly suspect Maxwell would be loth for me and any agent of his to hold discourse together.'

'Then speak to me, for my father you will not be admitted to.'

'Will you tell him that I am returned from America? I am pretty sure that then he will be the first to wish to see me.'

'I shall tell him nothing that might induce him to apply himself to any sort of business.'

'Well, then, as the business must be done, it must be done with you, Miss Judith.'

The man, in spite of his insolence, seemed somewhat at a loss to proceed.

'As well now as at any time,' replied Judith, firmly; 'for I do not wish you to come up to the Castle.'

'Old debts, I see, are apt to be forgotten in these quarters,' said Donaldson, sulkily. 'This is not the welcome you gave me when I brought your father home.'

'Nor would be now, Donaldson, but that you have lost sight of respect, and have given me just cause of displeasure,' replied Judith, gravely.

'Well, Miss Judith, I wish to cause you no displeasure if you cause me none; so let us go to the point. I am a needy man, that is the truth of it; and to whom can I more fairly come than to one who owes all the mountains of gold which he is piling up, wholly and solely to me?'

'What is your meaning?'

'Ask your father; he will tell you.'

'I ask you.'

'Why, those mines that are now working—I was the first who told him of them.'

'You? Campbell discovered them.'

'Not a bit of it. I discovered them. I told Maxwell the secret for a certain consideration. I showed them to him the very day he got his fall. His wits were a wool-gathering, I expect, as he rode homewards. He gave me so much to keep quiet then; all that is gone, and I want twice as much now, if it be any object to him that all the world should not know, as well as I do, that he was perfectly well acquainted with the existence of these mines when he seized the estate.'

Judith turned pale; her step faltered—she sank down on a stone near. Donaldson was alarmed; he thought she was going to faint.

'Don't touch me,' she said. 'Be silent.'

Silence was kept for a while, which she was the first to break.

'Why,' she asked, 'am I to believe this to be aught but slander?' Her heart smote her as she

made the inquiry. She found in Donaldson's bold assertion the key to all her father's terrors; and with bitterness she remembered the day in which she had triumphed in winning Meredith's consent to sell his farm.

'You do believe me—why, I can't tell; and proofs, were they wanted, I could give: but the one proof I offer is, that you should confront me with your father.'

'That cannot be. I conjure you not to intrude on him.'

'Will you give me satisfaction?'

Judith made no answer; her spirit revolted from offering a bribe. Yet, to dishonour her father—probably to kill him—was she to make a decision which should bring such consequences?

'I must have time to consider,' she said, in a trembling voice.

Donaldson saw his advantage.

'It will not suit me to be long in this part of the country.'

'How long can you wait?'

'Say till to-morrow. To-morrow evening at this time I will be here.'

'I will not say sooner than the following day,' returned Judith, with spirit. 'At this hour, on the day after to-morrow, you shall know my decision.'

Donaldson consented sullenly, and walked away.

Relieved from his presence, Judith sprang to her feet, scarcely allowing herself time to think till she was within the grounds; then, stopping short, she cried, half-aloud:

'Oh! my poor father!—my unhappy father!

And this is the repentance which I thought might gain absolution? He has deceived me and himself, and ruined both—both!'

Casting herself down under a beech-tree, she sobbed and wept without restraint; and seemed incapable, for a time, even of the exertion of rising again from the ground.

'Judith, dearest Judith! why these tears?' asked Guildford.

'Why have you left my father?' cried Judith, starting up, and speaking with that quick anger by which she was liable to be overtaken when smarting with grief, or surprised out of self-command.

'Your father slept, and I thought I would come to meet you,' replied Guildford. His mild gravity, Judith already well knew, had the power, beyond all else, to bridle her impatient spirit.

'Forgive me, Arthur,' she said, with a softness, which in her was peculiarly touching, and she placed her arm in his. They walked on, Judith's eyes fixed on the ground; the thought present with her was, that the fact which she had come to the knowledge of, would separate Guildford from her. Guildford supposed her to be still occupied with that which was the cause of her tears, and was desirous to learn it.

'May I not know what you are thinking of, Judith?' he asked.

'Yes,' said Judith, raising her eyes; 'yes, you may. I was thinking how little I am worthy of you; how often my angry, impatient spirit would hurt and vex your mild and sensitive one; that I am not capable of making you as happy as I would

wish you to be. That if Providence do yet separate us, I must acquiesce in the decree, as certainly a just one to me, and perhaps a merciful one to you.'

'Judith! separated from you I cannot be happy.'

'Don't say that, Arthur?' cried Judith, passionately. 'I do not now even wish to believe it.'

Guildford stopped short, in amazement.

'Do not trifle with my feelings under the semblance of considering them; this sort of sophistication is not in character with the nature I love you for; it is a mere phantom of generosity; you are all real. Is there a meaning in your words?'

'Yes, yes; one only too deep—too real; but do not ask it yet, Arthur. Trust to my truth and honesty. I feel that you may. I feel that God will give me grace to be true and honest.'

And Judith's countenance, as she ventured this assertion, was truly noble.

'I do trust you, entirely,' replied Guildford.

Judith placed her hand in his.

'Oh! what comfort in those words!' she exclaimed. 'And now, Arthur, you must let me spend this evening alone with my father. I think that will be best. I am sure it will.'

'Whatever you ask I will do.'

Judith faintly smiled her thanks.

'Shall I go to Sybil?' said Guildford.

'Yes; that is no severe imposition.'

'We shall talk of you.'

'I believe it,' she replied; and suffering herself to linger no longer, she hurried into the Castle, and

to her own chamber. There, casting herself on a seat, she exclaimed :

'Yes! they will talk of me, and of my future happiness, to be enjoyed as his wife; and it is all, all false—never to exist. They will talk till the time will seem short, though I be not there; and never imagine the hours of torture I am going through —each moment lengthened out! Oh! my father, what havoc has your error produced! And she for whom you plotted and coveted—she it is whom you slay.

'But these are thoughts too much of self, for Arthur is self—my very, only self. I must discard them; they must be after, not present, thoughts. I must go to that dying man, and wrestle again with the sin which I believed vanquished.'

CHAPTER LXV.

He sat him on Repentance hicht,
And glowr'd upon the sea;
And sair and heavily he sicht,
But nae drap eased his bree.

'The night is fair and calm the air,
No blasts disturb the tree;
Baith men and beast now tak their rest,
And a's at peace but me—

'No, lang lang maun the mourner pine,
And meikle penance dree;
Wha has a heavy heart like mine,
Ere light that heart can be.'

THE LORD HERRIES HIS COMPLAINT.

'WHERE is Guildford?' asked Maxwell, as Judith entering his chamber alone, placed herself in the post which she usually occupied.

'Gone to pass the evening with Miss Evelyn,' was Judith's somewhat tremulous reply.

Maxwell was displeased; he was accustomed to listen with considerable interest to Guildford's conversation, and he said: 'We shall be very dull without him.'

At another time, Judith would have heard this remark with a smile of pleasure; now it gave her

exquisite pain. Her lip grew white, her eye was dimmed with a tear she dashed away before it was detected, and busied herself in silence about various little matters relating to her father's comfort, gave him his usual evening meal, but did all she had to do with a gravity which excited his attention.

'Judith,' he asked, 'did you see Guildford after he quitted me?'

'Yes, father.'

'I hope you and he had no foolish disagreement,' said Maxwell, with a look of keen scrutiny such as he used to be remarkable for, and with something of malice he added: 'Remember, I have often complained of your temper.'

'You have, and justly, I dare say. I will strive for the future to give you less cause of complaint.'

'Nay, it is he whom it will chiefly concern henceforth,' replied Maxwell, disarmed by her reply.

'Father,' said Judith; 'we have had no disagreement, nor do I think we are likely to disagree. We may even lack the opportunity.'

She was in that state of suffering in which we take the sole pleasure that remains to us—to approach almost with sarcasm that agony which threatens to part flesh and spirit asunder. Young, healthy, high spirited, Judith had never felt a dying sensation till this day, and this day she had felt it. As happiness and hope expired, her heart sank as if she too must die.

'Arthur went to the cottage because I bid him,' she continued.

'Indeed! and why this decree of banishment?'

'Because I knew that it was necessary for us to be alone together. I have to speak to you on a subject which does not as yet admit of the presence of any third person.'

'It ought to be a very important one from your manner.'

'It is the most important I have ever had to do with, and the most painful.'

Her father looked nervous.

'What do you mean, Judith? No more preliminaries—they do me no good.'

'Then, dearest father,' said Judith, coming close to him, and taking his hand in hers; 'exert yourself to bear what must be encountered. After all it is better, a thousand times better, than it was yesterday. I would not part with one particle of truth to recover all the joy my heart then experienced, founded as it was on falsehood.'

Maxwell grew alarmingly pale, but made no effort to check her.

'As I came home through the wood, father, I met a man whom you have often mentioned, I knew not why—'

'Donaldson,' groaned Maxwell.

'I need say no more,' replied Judith. A pause followed; it seemed as if Maxwell would never break it, and Judith added:

'He sought a bribe.'

'Let him have it—to the half of the estate—let him have it.'

'Oh! no—no!' exclaimed Judith, letting go his hand. The cold damp gathered on his brow; and she wiped it gently away. She brought him a

medicine she was accustomed to administer; as he recovered himself, he said:

'You would bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.'

Judith answered not. She knew that they must so descend.

'My money is my own. Who shall prevent me from doing what I will with it? and shall I not sacrifice it for my honour?'

Judith could scarcely refrain from indignantly repudiating this idea of honour; one glance at that man, enfeebled and aged, but not with years, put out the fire in a flood of pity.

'Father,' she said; 'let us cast away any vain, worldly idea of honour—and think of honesty—of answering before God.'

'Whom do I injure?'

'Your own soul.'

'I am weary of this. You have brought Douglas to preach to me, you have preached yourself till I am weary.'

'There may be men foolhardy enough to despise the thought of judgment in health, but a dying man cannot do this,' said Judith.

'You tell me that I am dying—'

'I do, and I implore you not to satisfy yourself with the semblance of repentance, but to repent.'

'Father, dearest father,' exclaimed Judith, breaking the silence which followed these words. 'I will be at your side through all your trial. Whatever of sorrow or of shame fall on you, I will drink as deep as you. Only be brave—be true. Quit the paths of falsehood, and come out into the light. Men

may frown, men may scoff, but the sunshine of God's smile shall cheer us.'

'God smile on me!'

'Yes. He ever smiles on the penitent. Angels rejoice—and He says, 'Rejoice *with Me*, for I have found My sheep which was lost.'

'It is all too late. My sin has found me out.'

'It is never too late while there is life—while the tree is standing.'

'Standing!' repeated Maxwell, bitterly. 'Wretched man that I am! only this was wanting to lay me low. The blast hath come.'

'Father! father!' cried Judith, covering her eyes with her hands; 'defer not, linger not—'

'Think,' he interrupted with sternness, 'how often you have implored me not to leave you an inheritance of shame.'

'Too proudly, perhaps,' said Judith, sadly.

'And now, can you brook it better when about to ally yourself to a man of punctilious honour?'

'I resign all prospect of ever being his wife,' replied Judith, firmly.

'Yet I have believed that you loved him!' exclaimed Maxwell.

Judith gave no answer.

'Is there no place for tenderness in your proud, inflexible nature?' continued her father. 'Never to resign a purpose—that was once my own mood, and is always yours. For this will you humble me before all men, hasten my death, annihilate Guildford's hopes, wreck your own happiness—'

Judith raised her head, which had sunk upon her breast.

'All this, or more, must I encounter rather than counsel you to live in sin.'

Maxwell was shaken.

'But what aggravation of the past is there in purchasing silence for the future?'

'The true penitent confesses his guilt before God and man, and would not, if he could, escape the penalty or the shame. It is written, 'Confess ye your faults one to another.''

'Stop, stop. I will not have these Scripture phrases graven on my brain, with a pen of iron, Judith; you have well-nigh maddened me long since.'

And, with awful solemnity, the dying man raised himself, and exclaimed, gazing straight forward as he did so:

'It is required of stewards that a man be found faithful.'

As he ended, he sank back in a swoon.

CHAPTER LXVI.

The star of the unconquered will,
It rises in my breast,
Serene, and resolute, and still,
And calm, and self-possest.

LONGFELLOW.

THE morning dawned gloomily. Judith heard her father summon her in a feeble voice to his side:

'Bring Donaldson to me to-day. You know where to find him.'

'Indeed I do not.'

'Then he will find us.'

'I shall know where to meet him later.'

'Then bring him hither. Will you obey me?'

'I cannot tell.'

Maxwell lay there, too weak to evince resentment; the tears ran down his cheeks, and Judith, kneeling at his side, kissed them away.

'Will you grant me no respite?' at length he whispered. 'What would you have me do?' he demanded, almost fiercely, after waiting for an answer to his first question.

'Nothing that your own conscience does not corroborate. I would advise you to send for Mr.

Douglas, to reveal to him the facts of the past, and to hear his opinion. From his lips you have often listened to the injunction which I would now ask you, for your own peace and comfort, to consider.'

Judith turned to the Prayer Book which, during her night-watch, had lain at her side, and read, in a low, earnest voice, the exhortation which she deemed applicable. As the last words, 'to the quieting of his conscience and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness,' died on her lips, Maxwell felt that he had no doubtfulness, and groaned.

'Counsel I need not, and comfort there is none.'

'There are both, if you will avail yourself of them, dear father.'

During the night, while her father slept the sleep of exhaustion, Judith, endowed with more vigour, watched and prayed. She had now firmly resolved that she would not be the instrument of bribing Donaldson; in her father's last precious days it was to cry peace, peace, where there was no peace, to daub the walls with untempered mortar. She had also determined that she would never give her hand to Guildford while he was in ignorance of the dishonour, deeper than any either had contemplated, which still clung to her father.

'And if he knew it, what would his decision concerning me be?—that is for him to make, not for me to meditate on. One thing I know—that I ought to set him free as if no vow of love had ever passed his lips—free in very truth—so free that my heart should never condemn him for using his freedom—no make-believe release. Here is a test of my honesty.'

And with all her heart she prayed to be thus honest, and to cast out all angry, disquieting thoughts as to how much her confidence had been abused, her gratitude accepted while undeserved, by her father. These were the resolutions with which she looked out on the morning of another day—to stand, to withstand, and to forgive;—to stand firm with her father, to withstand Arthur. Next came the consideration of the question—if her father insisted on seeing Donaldson, had she the right to refuse to allow him to do so? Arnold, it is true, had forbidden all excitement, but she had taken on herself to violate that injunction already.

'I will bear no message to him relating to terms I deem dishonourable; but if my father reiterate his command to me to send him hither, have I a right to refuse? The interview could have but one issue, that is evident. But I have warned—I have entreated. Am I now bound to leave him his freedom of action?'

She resolved that she would not quit her father's side till the hour came for keeping her promise to Donaldson. Possibly in that space of time his heart might change. Guildford sent a message to ask to see her; she wrote a line to beg him to be content not to make the request till he should hear from her; this Maxwell discovered, and reproved her for it. Some dreary hours passed, when, a second time, she was called from his room. A little boy, from a village several miles away, had brought a note, which he would give into no hands but her own. Judith descended to receive it. She did not know the child when she saw him; he

seemed more unwilling than mere uncouthness would have made him, to answer the questions she put to him. The writing, over which she had instantly glanced her eye, was as follows:

'Miss Judith,—I told you that I could not remain long in this part of the country, therefore if it is of importance to you to see me again, you must be in the wood at the hour of five this evening.'

Judith resolved to comply with this summons without acquainting her father that she had received it, and to judge, when with Donaldson, what her future steps should be. She turned to the boy, and said:

'Say 'very well,' that answer is sufficient.'

It was some little distance to the appointed spot; and about four she quitted her father's room unquestioned, and a few moments afterwards the Castle. She crossed the grounds where she could not be visible from the windows of his chamber, and came out on a path beyond, when, contrary to her wishes, she met Guildford. He started:

'I did not know that you would leave the house to-day,' he said.

'Nor did I, when I wrote to you,' was her frank reply; if he had felt anything like displeasure, the sound of her voice dispelled it.

'Where are you going? I may accompany you—'

'Only a part, a very little part of the way, then. Don't ask me any questions, please. Remember your kind, your generous words of yesterday. shall never forget them.'

She spoke with a depth of feeling which would have touched a less noble nature than that of Guildford, and he replied, warmly:

'Nor I retract them. I will not go a step further with you.'

'Not if I give you leave to come as far as that tree?'

Arthur smiled, and walked by her side, but Judith did not speak again; and such was the conflict of emotion on her face, that Guildford did not dare to speak either. They had reached the tree, and Judith stopped; she looked up in Arthur's face, she held out her hands to him, and as he clasped them, she said, in a low voice:

'Say, 'God be with you, Judith!' before we part.'

'Tell me that you are not going into danger?' exclaimed Guildford, in sudden alarm.

'Not the slightest!' replied Judith, promptly, and scornfully.

'God be with you, my own Judith!' repeated Guildford, pressing her for one moment to his heart.

'His own!' exclaimed Judith to herself, with anguish.

'Oh! that it may be so!'

A few moments of rapid descent (for she felt as if she could not press onward with too much speed, so did the agony of her spirit spur her), brought her to the edge of the wood. She threaded the path swiftly, and reached the stone on which she had sunk down yesterday. She seated herself to await Donaldson's arrival, and was too much absorbed in her own thoughts to heed how time went. At

last she started, observed how the shadows had lengthened, looked at her watch, and found that the appointed hour was long passed. She sprang to her feet as a rustling caught her ear; she turned, but merely a hare crossed her path. She began to think Donaldson's absence very strange, and to experience an alarm unknown to her before, and contradicting the assurance she had given Guildford without hesitation.

'These are vain terrors!' she exclaimed, after standing still for a few minutes in silence so absolute that she could hear her own heart beat. 'He would not dare to harm me. But why should I wait here longer?' And resolving to quit the wood before daylight was gone, she took her way homewards, uninterrupted by any one.

CHAPTER LXVII.

We heretofore have trusted in each other;
Too wholly have we trusted to have need
Of words or vows, pledges or protestations.
Let not such trust be hastily dissolved.

PHILIP VAN ARTEVELDE.

'YOU have been two hours absent, Judith. Come here. Have you seen—' asked Maxwell, in a tone of ill-disguised anxiety.

'No, father,' replied Judith, certain that he meant Donaldson.

'Have you been walking with Guildford?'

'Part of the time I have; but I did not go out with the intention of doing so.'

Maxwell asked no more questions, and seemed at ease.

Judith felt that there was a necessity to keep her former appointment on the morrow, and when the hour approached, set out to do so with more than her former trepidation. Again she waited in vain, and returned to the house much perplexed. She went straight to her father, and said:

'He has twice failed to keep his appointment. What can this mean?'

'How am I to tell you?'

'Have you sent him any message?'

'None,' replied Maxwell. 'One thing is possible —that he may not have ventured to stay in the country.'

Judith thought over the words of the note, and one of the expressions Donaldson had used the first day, and believed that this was possible. No other explanation reached her. No blow was struck. All apparently went as before, when Judith said to her father:

'Whilst Colonel Guildford is in ignorance of Donaldson's secret, I cannot become his wife, and I must tell him so.'

'Judith, you are mad; and will madden me.'

Judith heard this angry reproach in silence; her serious eyes met her father's, and his sank beneath their gaze. She left the room to seek Guildford, who she knew was just entering the house. She met him in the hall, and he drew her into the recess of the window, bidding her look on the fairy crescent moon reflected on the lake.

'Beautiful, peaceful scene,' he said, with a sigh, which seemed one of satisfaction. He felt the hand he held in his start as if in pain; then again it lay still, and Judith, in that deep voice which was sometimes hers, said, slowly:

'Arthur, I came to seek you; I have that to say which must not be delayed. Every day—every hour, rebukes me as it passes. I have yet further claims to make on the trust which you promised me.'

Guildford felt disquieted. Though he had trusted

her with heart and mind, as well as tongue, he could ill endure a necessity for concealment.

'You look dissatisfied,' said Judith, tearfully, 'and what I have to say will make you much more so. I ought not to be your wife until I am at liberty to have no secret from you; and that liberty I do not know that I shall ever enjoy.'

'What can this mean?' exclaimed Guildford, in amazement.

'Just what I say,' replied Judith. 'I must not be your wife as long as I conceal aught from you; and if ever the day come—a day I long for, pray for, and will not cease even to hope for and to expect—which shall reveal all to you, you may then no longer desire to make me your wife—nor should I condemn the change.'

'Do not try me too far. Can this be sober earnest?'

'Yes,' replied Judith, in the accent of blank despair.

Guildford gazed on her in silence for a moment, then exclaimed:

'It were, indeed, a strange jest. But, Judith, the thing is impossible. You are deceiving yourself. You have looked ill of late, and are harassed; vain imaginations have taken the place of realities.'

Judith shook her head mournfully.

'Well, secret though there be, it cannot be one of your own, nor does it concern you, personally. It cannot affect my feelings towards you, nor my duty. It is a secret of—'

'Pray seek no further; I implore you, do not! Were it to pass my lips it would render them hateful.

I can never speak it, and I can never unite myself to you while it is unspoken.'

Guildford turned from her as if about to hasten up-stairs. Judith threw herself with the quickness of lightning between him and the staircase, exclaiming:

'Oh! Arthur, spare my father! Do not try to force from his lips anything that his own heart does not prompt them to utter. This is the sole favour I now dare ask of you.'

He paused, as if he yielded compliance with difficulty, took her hand, and held it wistfully.

'Judith,' he said, 'you must not then send me from you. You must believe, and act on the belief that nothing can now affect my feelings nor my relation towards you. To come forward last year as your suitor, at the moment when you were enriched by a proceeding no man of honour could approve, was a weakness of which I could not be guilty, cost me what it would to refrain. But now, no after discovery can make it my duty to withdraw, satisfied as I am of your perfect rectitude. Even though disgrace were to cast its shadow on you, I should know that the substance could not be there, and I would not shrink.'

'This language,' replied Judith, with all the firmness she could maintain, 'becomes your high-mindedness, and the earnestness of your love; and could I at this moment unveil the truth, and did you after looking it in the face abide by this decision, I believe that I could feel justified in accepting it. But this is not the case. I cannot place facts before you, and you ought to know them before you judge. I

set you wholly free from all previous determinations. It must be so, and I think the wisest and best step for you to take would be to leave me—to seek other scenes and other companions; among them you might judge more truly, more calmly, of what would be most for your future happiness—your honour.'

'I know well,' replied Guildford, with some indignation in his tone and on his brow, 'on what my happiness depends, and my honour I have been accustomed to guard even at the expense of it. I will not move you to forego your decision, but you must also leave me to act on mine.'

And Guildford, scrupulously true to his word, urged Judith no more, but her father did. Forced to reply to him, she could not vary from her first words.

'You have been a stubborn child to me,' said Maxwell, angrily.

'God forgive me, if it be so,' replied Judith, with uncontrollable emotion. 'God forgive us both our shortcomings towards each other.'

Bitterly sweet were thenceforward the hours of intercourse between Judith and her lover—so sweet that sometimes the bitterness was forgotten—so bitter that sometimes the lip recoiled from the cup. Bitterest of all were the feelings of the dying man as he regarded them, and saw the mournfulness which overspread the once happy countenance of his child, lately beaming on him with joy and gratitude, and the ill-concealed scorn and icy reserve which day by day chilled Guildford's demeanour towards him.

Autumn was approaching, and everything was

prepared for the departure of Maxwell and his daughter. They were to sail to Leghorn, and thence to proceed to Florence, where Maxwell intended, before he proceeded further south, to see Horace Lindsay. Colonel Guildford at once declared his determination to pass the winter in Italy. He would be there as early as the Maxwells, but was he to be forbidden to travel with them?

'In your father's state of health, Judith, is it not most desirable that you should be accompanied by some one privileged to act for you? Will nothing content you but to live with me as if I must one day be your enemy?'

Mr. Douglas, Miss Evelyn, leaned towards Guildford's opinion; Maxwell advocated it.

'Yet without your permission, Judith, I will not carry it out.'

'And I, Arthur, I cannot consent,' replied Judith, in a tone so sad that it would have been cruelty to urge the question further. Guildford, therefore, departed to see Judith no more till both should arrive in Italy. Miss Evelyn sympathised so warmly in his pain and disappointment, that when Judith came to bid her farewell, she could not refrain from saying:

'You know that indeed I cannot pardon you for making Arthur so very unhappy.'

'Will you be less generous than he?' asked Judith.

'Yes. The more forgiving he is, the more he pleads with me to forgive, the less able I feel to do so. I never thought you capricious, tyrannical before—such qualities seem to me no part of your

frank character. Yet I cannot understand your retractation of a consent to an immediate union, which would secure Arthur's happiness (as far as earthly happiness can be secured), and I always supposed would alleviate your father's natural uneasiness concerning you.'

'I have asked Arthur to trust me, and he does; you, who have known me much longer, should do so more readily; and as to forgiveness, will the conviction of my unhappiness, as far as words can impress it, render you more merciful?'

'No, my dear child, less so; it doubles my regret and pain. But, Judith, are you quite sure that you are not doing more than is required of you? You are very romantic. I have helped to make you so, I am afraid.'

'I am quite sure that I am right. If you knew how strong my affection is, you would perceive that nothing less than certainty could brace me to action. I will not say I love him as he deserves. I will not measure his merits by my poor capacity; but I will say that I love him as I must have loved one whom I promised to marry; entirely—to the exclusion of any future affection.'

'And yet you are convinced that you ought not to fulfil that promise? Then I must be convinced, too,' said Miss Evelyn, with a sigh.

'In my present circumstances—no. In the future—who can build on the future, or tell what it may be? Oh! if he could forget the past—go from me—love another—it might be happier for him, and there would be nothing wrong in it.'

She pressed her hand to her burning eye-balls, and

looked so wild and unlike herself, that Miss Evelyn broke off the conversation by folding her tenderly to her bosom, and saying:

'No circumstances will ever render you other than the noblest of women, my darling child; on that confidence I repose; therefore I will hope on, and pray on for you and for Arthur. I cannot be persuaded that, even in this world, you are to be separated.'

Mr. Douglas, to whom Judith's conduct, though unexplained, was not wholly inexplicable, took leave of her in few words:

'God bless you, my dear child; He will, for you are walking in a narrow way, and one that few would find.'

CHAPTER LXVIII.

The heaviness and guilt within my bosom
Takes off my manhood. . . .
. . . . Knighthood and honours borne,
As I wear mine, are title but of scorn.—
. . . . Though those that are betrayed
Do feel the treason sharply, yet the traitor
Stands in worse case of woe.

CYMBELINE.

'MY DEAR NEPHEW,—These lines, if you ever read them at all, will be the last written by the hand of a man unwilling to quit life without one acknowledgment — tardy, worthless, as it may be—of heartfelt regret for the wrongs he has done to others—to you principally—to the woman you love. The world used to call me no one's enemy but my own; and I liked to be so called. Now, I confess that, in listening to its flattery, I deluded myself with a lie.

'If I return alive from the present desperate act to which I have pledged myself, I shall destroy this letter, of course. Yet I can't help fancying—it is a conviction, weakened by the remembrance of many a broken resolution—that if I burn this paper, the feelings which constrain me to write it will then

constrain me to seek some other mode of testifying the remorse with which I regard the past.

'Here, on the very spot where, sixteen years ago, I robbed Gerald Courtenay of his last guinea, I am going to stand as the mark of the man who has robbed me of mine—as, I believe, dishonestly. This is the crowning act of madness to a wasted existence—miserable wretch that I am! Oh! Horace, once my actions, even my precepts, tended to make you resemble me. Thank Heaven, you escaped corruption! And Beatrice—I never could feel unkindly to her. Who could? When I offended her most, I verily believed I was taking the only wretched way that remained of serving you both. If I fall, I know that, in asking her forgiveness and yours, I make the appeal to those who will deal mercifully by my memory.

'And Anne—she will pardon when she reflects that I have not injured you, heart or mind. Yes; your nobleness will obliterate the recollection of my baseness. I have written elsewhere to Adela, briefly.

'All the necessary papers for your inheritance are in safe keeping with Stewart, in Edinburgh. I don't believe Maxwell will wrong you. Even that man might never have quitted his path of duty, had it not been for me.

'R. L.

'Baden-Baden, August, 18—.'

This was the letter which reached Horace Lindsay at Florence, at a time when he was in total ignorance of Sir Roderic's place of residence. Its black seal,

and the superscription to Sir Horace Lindsay, warned him of the death of his uncle, but could not prepare him for the circumstances of horror which had attended it. While he was reading it, with that blankness of feeling and of comprehension which accompanies the first shock of a misfortune, Anne entered the room. Alarmed by the expression of her brother's countenance, she came hastily towards him; her eye fell on the cover of the letter, and then glanced at Horace for further explanation.

'My poor uncle!' exclaimed Horace, who first realized the horror he felt in his dread of communicating it to Anne; and, bending down his head on his arms, he gave way to a burst of emotion. Anne stood in silence beside him, her hand resting gently on his shoulder. After a few moments, he looked up, and, throwing his arm round her, placed the letter in her hand.

'His last, dearest Anne—the sole atonement he could make for error. Oh! he had a nature framed for better things.'

Anne read rapidly, with the same grief and pity that Horace felt.

'Unhappy man!' she said, 'unhappy man! thus to have rushed to the tribunal of God!'

She dropped the letter, and hid her face. And, in silent grief, the brother and sister contemplated the doom of one who had forfeited reverence, but never utterly extinguished affection.

'All must be over, Anne,' said Horace, at length, 'or this would not have been transmitted.'

Anne gave a sorrowful gesture of consent.

'My first impulse was to rush to the spot to save

him from the commission of the deed; next I remembered it was already committed. Now, I desire to go there, at least to strive to bring to justice the wretch who has killed him, that he may never lure another victim to his destruction.'

'He will, in all probability, have fled,' said Anne.

'I know not,' replied Horace; 'but go I must, and learn all that can be learned of my unhappy uncle, without loss of time.'

Anne threw no obstacle in his way, did not remind him that, in two days, Beatrice Courtenay would be in Florence—a fact which was fully present to his thoughts. He went to seek an interview with Lord ——, to request permission to depart without delay, which was easily accorded. He speedily completed his preparations, and bid adieu to Anne. As he embraced her, he murmured:

'And I—who meant to be the first to welcome her—you will all see her before I shall!'

'It is just possible,' hesitated Anne, 'that you may deem it advisable to proceed to Scotland?'

'No, impossible!' cried Horace, indignantly. 'What? without returning here? Certainly not.'

And he was gone, impelled by the thought that, the sooner he went, the sooner he might return.

'And Lady St. Helens!' thought Anne, 'what will her feelings be? Surely, this terrible event will startle her out of her hardened pursuit of selfish pleasure, and will annihilate her proud resentment. Nay, it must do more. Will she not ask herself if she ever fanned to a flame the sparks of purer feeling —weakened temptation, or lightened trouble? If his last reflections were suggested by remorse, what

ought hers to be? May she at length be moved to consider her unfulfilled vow to love, to serve, to cherish; and chilling indifference, biting scorn, harsh rebuke, will no longer be trifles too light to weigh on her conscience!'

It was her grandfather who clasped Beatrice in his arms, in such an ecstacy of delight, that he quite forgot that it could be a matter of either wonder or interest to her that Horace Lindsay was not there. Anne gave the full explanation of her brother's absence.

'How very dreadful!' said Beatrice, growing pale as she listened. Now, for the first time, she and Anne could understand many little circumstances of mystery in Sir Roderic's conduct towards her; and these indications of a heart and conscience never entirely seared, touched them deeply, and added force to his appeal for their forgiveness. Courtenay recognised in Sir Roderic the injurer of his son, and the chief inflictor of the exile under which he had groaned; yet no fire was kindled in his meek bosom that outburned the flame of compassion. We have commonly small experience of what sensations enemies might stir within us; and, in asking an All-merciful God to pardon our secret sins, we can scarcely tell whether or not an unforgiving spirit be among them. Courtenay had been proved: he could say, 'Forgive me, as I forgive,' and lie down to rest with a quiet mind.

'I am sure,' said Anne, 'that Horace ought to proceed to Scotland, to see Mr. Maxwell.'

'Ought he?' replied Beatrice. 'Will he find him there? Miss Evelyn wrote me word that he

and his daughter were on the point of setting out to Italy.'

'Indeed?' said Anne. 'Then let us write instantly to Horace.'

Mr. Howard seemed never weary of hearing the minutest details of Beatrice's brief career. Her grandfather, satisfied that her wishes were accomplished, and that she was restored to them good, affectionate, and lovely as she left them, sat gazing on her in silent rapture, affording little proof that he heard or marked what she said.

'Not a bad thing for us,' observed Oreste to Maddalena, 'that the young Signor Orazio is a good way off, or we might not come in for a word from the fair Beatrice's mouth. We must not forget, either, that she is to become a great lady before long.'

'She is exactly as mild, humble, and affectionate as she was the first time we called her into this room to speak to her as a little child,' said Maddalena.

'Quite,' replied Oreste, heartily; 'but still, henceforward, I am determined to regard her as my patroness; and the old Castello, in which she is one day to dwell, shall be lined with my pictures, Ugolino, and all. The only objection is that, in sending them to a land so barbarous, they will never be looked on by any capable of appreciating them. Only hear poor Annunziata's description of the savage wildness of the place—'

'Oh! English Milors travel so much that the Castle will always be full of visitors,' answered Maddalena, smiling placidly; 'and Annunziata will return there, sooner than quit Beatrice: how she

retains all hearts.' Here Maddalena sighed; she was thinking of Flavio, and rejoicing in his absence at Siena.

Mr. Howard and Beatrice were sitting alone in the balcony which overhung the Arno. She watched him with affectionate interest, fancying that he looked more than usually pallid, at the close of a sultry day. She felt sure that she did not deceive herself — that she did not derive the conviction solely from the communications which her grandfather and Anne had made to her, when she thought that his countenance had assumed a more spiritual expression than she had formerly beheld there; and beneath the keen regret of knowing he was not long to abide with them, ran the deep under-current of joy in believing that his soul was attuned for a higher sphere. 'Beatrice,' he said, and she started at the sound of his voice. 'My child, you have bestowed on me these sweet evening hours, and I must not waste them; few more such will be mine. I want to speak with you of the past—to ask your forgiveness.'

'My forgiveness!' exclaimed Beatrice, sinking on her knees beside the old man's couch. 'I was thinking of all I have to thank you for. I was recalling the first time when, in my childhood, you laid this kind hand on my head'—and she raised it to her lips.

Mr. Howard was much affected; tears came to his eyes. 'Nevertheless,' he replied, 'in spite of my love for you, I abused the confidence you placed in me. It was my want of faith, Beatrice. I could not commit you to God's care. I would care for

you myself, and, in my miserable pride and infirmity, I sacrificed truth.'

Beatrice raised her eyes in silent wonder, asking, by them alone, 'What does this mean?'

'When I gave you to Lady St. Helens, I knew she was not worthy of the trust I induced your grandfather to repose in her; and from the time of your departure I was in constant anxiety as to the result of my unwarrantable experiment. The sight of Courtenay became a reproach to me—I frequently avoided him. But you know him to be unsuspecting as a child; he attributed my conduct to nothing but increasing despondency originating in the unhappy, hopeless condition of my mind, and increased by the withdrawal of your purifying influence. Again he approached with that reverent, loving earnestness with which he had formerly sought me. I could not repulse him as then I did, for the sake of your last words. I heard him with patience, though with little real attention. He came to me often, and I could not close my door, nor altogether my heart to him. Thus I learned all the tidings which reached him of you. One day he sought me with more indignation on his countenance than I ever expected to see him evince. It was justly excited, for its cause was Lady St. Helens' attempt to conquer your truth and fidelity. He came to me, confident that I should share his sentiments, as indeed I did, but not his surprise; nor was my scorn like his, absorbed by one single object. I despised myself far more than I did the false and frivolous Countess, and but for a few minutes did I conceal the real nature of my feelings. That day, Beatrice, I

told Courtenay that I had injured — wittingly perilled—him and you, and I received his forgiveness—'

'Oh! yes—yes,' murmured Beatrice. 'I was sure of that.'

'Is none of this new to you?' asked Mr. Howard, hastily.

'All,' replied Beatrice. 'He never wrote—never told me any of it. Don't you know,' she said, her eyes beaming through tears, 'repentance blots out?'

'I do know it now,' returned Howard, looking upwards with an expression of devout gratitude Beatrice had not hitherto seen on his countenance; the silence which succeeded she felt to be the silence of prayer. Her heart throbbed with delight.

'I expressed astonishment,' said Mr. Howard, turning to her, 'at his power of forgiveness. He stopped me short—"It is not *my* power," he answered. "You have proved the servant's, now prove the Master's love." From that hour, praise be to God, my heart opened to his teaching. How differently did I listen to him when the dark shadow of my own insincerity no longer fell between us.

'And now, Beatrice, I have repeated to you the confession made to him; and can you, too, forgive me, my child?'

Beatrice made no other answer than throwing herself into his arms; her tears were those of joy, and therefore she shed them without restraint; for now she knew, for the first time with certainty, that he, her friend, her benefactor, had won

'Something of the repose of Heaven
To conquerors of the world, self-mastering spirits given—
A something of the everlasting chime,
Ethereal, calm, sublime.
And Christ, at length, within his soul is born,
Declaring His own peace and ever-cloudless morn.'

For awhile Mr. Howard did not check Beatrice's emotion; at length, raising himself, he put her gently from him, smoothing back with his hands the dark braids of her hair, and gazing with regretful fondness on her face, he said:

'I have inflicted a deep pang—done you a great injury, Beatrice. I have robbed you of an object of your confidence—forced you to despise where you ignorantly revered—'

'No, no,' exclaimed Beatrice; 'never, never did I love or esteem you as now. You have made me so happy—happier than ever before.'

'Well, Beatrice, let me add one word, which will not displease you,—While I acknowledge how erroneously I chose for you, I give my full approbation to the choice you have yourself made.'

CHAPTER LXIX.

That close aspect of his
Does shew the mood of a much troubled breast.
KING JOHN.

MAXWELL appeared to derive some renovation of mind and body from the sea-voyage; and Guildford, the first person who met him at Leghorn, remarked on the improvement. The sick man's countenance immediately fell; he knew it was but the last flicker of the expiring candle. As soon as he reached Florence, he sent to the English ministry to inquire for Mr. Lindsay. The answer received was that he had quitted Florence on family affairs, and that the time of his return was unknown. The effect of this reply on Maxwell was remarkable. At first he seemed inexpressibly relieved, and talked cheerfully of proceeding to Rome. Judith offered no suggestion, but grew pale as death as she listened. She had hoped she knew not what from this interview, and now seemed turning to stone through despair. Her heart died within her. She scarcely heard what was said, till Guildford, who had entered, began to speak of going on to Rome. She turned suddenly to him, and in a tone of compressed agony, exclaimed:

'I implore you not to come there.'

The look which accompanied these words checked all expostulation. Guildford moved away, made some totally erroneous answer to a question of Maxwell's, and quitted the room.

Maxwell sat in gloomy silence; at length he said to Judith, abruptly:

'Why this dissatisfaction? What further can I do? Can I recal Mr. Lindsay at my pleasure?'

'Certainly not,' said Judith; 'it is unfortunate, but unforeseen. Still, dear father, is it impossible to send some inquiry to his private residence? His servants—Miss Lindsay even may be there.'

'Go, make what inquiries you will,' replied Maxwell; his face growing white as he spoke, and heaving a sigh that was almost a groan.

It was against Judith's generous nature to act on a permission thus accorded; yet she could ill bear to let her father depart without further endeavour. She sat in silent anxiety.

'Did you not hear me?' exclaimed Maxwell, querulously. 'Spare me when you can.'

Judith quitted the room, and instantly despatched a lacchè to bring what tidings he could of Mr. Lindsay, and to inquire if Miss Lindsay were in Florence; she furnished him with her father's card. The servant soon returned, having performed his task with the prompt intelligence and fidelity which often distinguishes the Italian domestic. He should have been quicker, he said, but the Signora chose to give him an answer in writing. Judith's hand trembled as she broke the seal, and read from Anne Lindsay the full explanation of her brother's absence. The letter ended with the words:

'Beatrice Courtenay is here with her grandfather; she had heard from Miss Evelyn that you were departing. I therefore wrote to Horace that if he desired to see Mr. Maxwell, it would be even safer for him to return here than to go to Scotland. I do not know what demands you have on your time, but it would give me great pleasure to see you, and I am sure Beatrice will more than share that desire when she knows of your arrival.'

Judith could form no opinion as to what effect the communication of Sir Roderic's death would have on her father. She descended to his room to make it as she best could.

'Have you gained any information?' he asked immediately.

'Miss Lindsay is here; she has written to me.'

Judith paused.

'Well?'

'It is a very solemn cause that has called Mr. Lindsay hence. His uncle—'

'What? Sir Roderic—how, where, when?' cried Maxwell, in one moment seizing her meaning.

'At Baden-Baden—very suddenly.'

'Happy man!' exclaimed Maxwell. 'Not inch by inch!—not daily, hourly torture!'

'Oh! father!' said Judith, deeply shocked, drawing near him, and laying her hand on his arm; 'unprepared, nay, even unsummoned of God—he fell in a duel!'

Maxwell sank back, and covered his eyes with his hand.

Judith gradually repeated to him all that Anne's

letter contained; and he was for some time silent. At last he observed:

'You ought to see Miss Lindsay to-day, as she desires it.'

'But, father, I cannot leave you.'

'Yes, I wish to be alone.'

Judith went; she found Anne and Beatrice together. The former, aware that circumstances had produced an intimacy between her companions in which she had not a share, after a while withdrew. Beatrice, who had marked with tender concern the traces of anxiety and sorrow on Judith's altered countenance, immediately took her hand with affection.

'Not one word about me, Beatrice,' exclaimed Judith, seeing what trembled on her lips.

'Of your father, then,' said Beatrice, in a tone of sympathy which went straight to Judith's heart; and without a moment's pause, she threw herself on her companion's neck, and uttering one word of agony, 'Dying!' she burst into a flood of tears.

That night Horace re-entered Florence, and went straight to Courtenay to claim his Beatrice. With what feelings each met, after the separation of months, and in circumstances so new and so propitious, may be better imagined than written.

'No word they spoke, no earthly thing they felt.'

To repair to Maxwell as early on the ensuing day as possible was Lindsay's next anxiety, felt chiefly on Judith's account; and he sent her a brief warning of his approach. Maxwell offered no objection to

receive him, nor evinced any satisfaction in the prospect. The most cordial admiration and regard for Judith, rendered Horace Lindsay's manner kind and gentle in the highest degree. Consideration for her father, he knew was the most acceptable tribute he could render to her. Moreover, he had always felt in a measure (and the feeling was strengthened by compassion, while he saw how dearly the strong man had paid for his acquisitions) that allowances were to be made for Maxwell, whom the extreme faultiness of Sir Roderic had environed with temptations to sin, which ought never to have existed. He likewise considered that the agent had offered all the reparation his mean mind could conceive practicable; and he was content to let him pass unvisited by disdain. A dying man is an awe-inspiring object, and as such Horace regarded him.

Maxwell, on his part, had ceased to kindle into animosity whenever he recalled Horace to his mind, as one who had overthrown and brought to light his schemes. He was even sincerely desirous to repair the injuries inflicted on the younger Lindsay by Sir Roderic and himself, and one of his objects in seeking him was to make him fully comprehend the position of affairs. Their interview over, Maxwell in solitude meditated on the courtesy with which he had been treated.

'Oh! that it were possible,' he said to himself, 'to go one step farther, and to be forgiven—to die in peace—to see Judith happy—for Guildford would not renounce her for my sin; it were one of a blacker dye, could he do so. Here—far away from my own country—from Duror—I knew that at home I could

never say it; that is why I urged them to bring me hither—not to lengthen the wretched span of life, which is a burden to me—but that I might die with a clear conscience, and that I might be buried here; not in that little churchyard in the bosom of my once smiling home, where the finger should point and the tongue should say, 'There lies the unfaithful steward!' I used to fancy it would cost me least to make the avowal to Sir Roderic—a man base enough to have conceived and practised the same treachery. I have shrunk from Guildford's grave eye and high bearing; but since I have spoken with Sir Horace, there is a frank kindliness of youth about him, that makes me almost disposed to bow down my head in his presence, and to say, 'I have sinned in the sight of heaven against you—forgive me!'

Yet for days after these reflections had occupied his mind, Maxwell was still silent. He evidently grew weaker. Judith, alarmed, now proposed to him to move on to Rome.

'I do not think I shall ever remove there,' replied Maxwell, gravely.

'But, father, I fear the cold winds of this place.'

'And I fear them not. My child, cannot you see plainly that I sink daily?'

Judith clasped her hands in despair.

'I have not yet transacted the business which brought me to Florence,' continued Maxwell.

'Sir Horace told me he was perfectly satisfied, that he quite understood—' said Judith, with hesitation.

'He understands nothing, as you know, Judith.'

Judith shuddered. Her father saw it, and, placing

his hand on her shoulder, with a gentleness and a tenderness unusual to him, he said:

'There shall be a fulness of understanding—a fulness of satisfaction, yet.'

Judith caught his hand. A light, as of the hope of heaven, suddenly broke over her face.

'Not a word, Judith; only obey me. You may now.'

'Oh! my father!' exclaimed Judith, pressing his hand passionately to her bosom. 'God bless you! God bless you!'

He took no notice of her words of emotion, but went on:

'Bring Lindsay and Guildford to my chamber, to-day. Go now, and seek them. Say no words of preparation: I must and will speak wholly for myself; the burden borne on my breast is too painful to be removed by less than this. Remember your own warning—'Confess ye your faults one to another.'"

Judith departed in silence, obedient to her father's bidding.

CHAPTER LXX.

> Sweet, mighty force of but one thought, when sent
> By God to move a sinner to repent.
>
> KEN.

JUDITH first sought Guildford:

'My father wishes to speak to you and to Sir Horace Lindsay to-day. Will you see him? Will you beg him, if possible, to comply? I have observed that my father has daily grown weaker, and he thinks himself worse since his arrival here. Delay would be most trying to him.'

Guildford offered no question, but went at once in search of Sir Horace, and returned with him. At the appointed hour they followed Judith to the sick man's chamber.

'Remain with us, my child,' said her father.

In the solemn silence of expectation they drew round him.

'Sir Horace Lindsay,' said Maxwell, suddenly speaking with that clear voice for which he used to be remarkable, 'I have sent for you here to tell you, in the presence of Colonel Guildford and of my daughter, who have suffered greatly by my secrecy, that up to this time I have played the part of a hypocrite, and have never laid before you the real

state of the case. I wronged your family far more than you are yet aware of. Early in the year in which Sir Roderic summoned you to Scotland, I had been informed by a man named Donaldson of the existence of the mines now being worked on the Auldgirth, or Meredith's farm, which name you will better know it by. I would gladly, had it been possible, have purchased the land on my own account, and have offered a fair allowance for the minerals; but I knew that the obstinate pride of the proprietor would make him determined to sell to no less a person than the Laird of Duror. I at this time held Sir Roderic in my power. I was resolved not to set him free. I therefore purchased Meredith's farm for him, and concealed the value of the acquisition. Yet I did not then intend to strip him of his lands. I went on step by step whither I had not meant to go. My daughter warned me. She was a faithful witness of the truth. She pronounced words which, while I affected deafness to them at the time, never ceased to ring in my ears: 'It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.'"

Here Maxwell made a pause. Horace entreated him to desist:

'No more is needed, I assure you.'

'I must go on,' replied Maxwell; 'I owe much more to her and to him,' he pointed to Guildford, who, with a face of intense but resolutely repressed anxiety, sat listening. 'While I was debating how I could avail myself of the treasure I had in my possession, and which, concealed, was useless, my own agent solved the difficulty. He discovered the mines during my incapacitating illness. Judith

placed before me a scheme which, having failed in her more generous suggestions, she thought I might yet be prevailed on to adopt. I did consent. My conscience had never known peace, and I had also experienced mortifications in the contempt and hatred of my neighbours, to which all my success could not harden me. I sought refuge where Judith bid me seek it, and for a time was almost reconciled to myself, and trusted that my child's happiness was secured. Donaldson returned. Judith refused him an interview with me. He demanded a bribe; that she scorned to yield. She implored me to make a full confession; that I recoiled from. How it happened I know not; for two long hours she left me—ages they have seemed since—long enough to play away a soul with Satan they proved. Soon after she quitted me, Donaldson appeared.'

'Father,' exclaimed Judith, 'he had lured me from you, and for this purpose!'

'I granted him all he asked,' continued Maxwell, after hearing Judith's words, without any direct comment on them, 'rejoicing in the opportunity of so doing. From that day he was silent, and I alone knew why. Yet Duror became hourly more insupportable to me. The injury I had inflicted on my child's happiness in constraining her (for she deemed herself constrained) to renounce one beloved and worthy of her, was a new torment. I had no rest night or day, and I believed I could find it better anywhere than there. I cherished a vague idea of telling the secret some day, or leaving it behind me in writing. I knew not how I should proceed, but I felt that the first step was to quit Duror; in

this I was not mistaken. But I also attribute the change which has come over me, in some measure, Sir Horace, to your mild and generous treatment of me. Had you visited me with scorn and obloquy, I might have defied them. But the coals of fire which you, which all, have heaped on my head, I could not endure; and I place myself before you as a man degraded, broken down, by his own sin, which has dogged him to the grave.

'Yet at this moment,' he added, with a sudden burst of contentment, 'I feel less wretched in your presence than I have for weeks—aye—months past.'

Judith threw herself on her father's neck, embracing him passionately. He yielded to her for a moment, then put her aside, and she sank down, hiding her face on his knees, while he addressed Lindsay:

'You now know the whole truth, Sir Horace; make what use you will of it. I place everything in your hands in implicit confidence and submission.'

'Mr. Maxwell,' said Horace, extending his hand, with all his natural warmth of manner, 'I assure you that the past is forgiven, and that I regard you at this moment with sentiments of far greater cordiality than when I last retired from this room.'

He withdrew. Guildford stepped forward as the door closed on Horace, and, in a voice of deep emotion, said:

'I ask you, with the feelings of respect which one true man has for another, give me back your child.'

'Take her,' replied Maxwell; 'true she is, and worthy of the truest!'

'Judith,' said Maxwell, rousing himself from the state of exhaustion in which he had lain for days after this interview, 'there is still confession to be made, pardon to be sought. That old man, Meredith,—write to him, tell him that a guilty, dying man craves his forgiveness. All that I could do without betraying my miserable secret I have done. Wealth has been showered upon him, though from what hand he knew not; but his heart must still yearn for bonnie Scotland.'

'Dearest father,' replied Judith, 'that is already cared for. Sir Horace Lindsay lost not a day in learning from me all I could tell as to his present abode; a letter is already despatched, offering to restore his home—to do anything that can conduce to his comfort—he has only to name his wishes, and they will be fulfilled.'

'Heaven be praised!' exclaimed the dying man; 'his bent form and grey hairs will no more rise in the darkness of the night to upbraid me with having driven him to a foreign land.' And he again closed his weary eyes.

John Maxwell was laid in a retired spot in the English burial-ground at Florence. Over his remains was raised the sacred emblem of our faith, and at its foot were engraved the words—'Spes unica.'

Before the lapse of many years there rose at Duror, in the vicinity of the dwellings of the miners (a rapidly-increasing community), a church designed for their use. The structure was beautiful; everything was excellent in workmanship and ma-

terial, but everything was kept in harmony with the simplicity of the spot, and of the population who would chiefly frequent it. The founder of the sacred edifice was Judith Guildford, who had requested Sir Horace Lindsay to devote to this purpose the remainder of the debt owing to her father, which the produce of the mines was to liquidate.

The church was dedicated to St. Peter the Apostle, who 'wept bitterly' for his sin. Within, various texts, chosen also by Judith, were inscribed on the walls; and one, placed in no conspicuous position, might possibly be recognised by the few acquainted with the most private circumstances of her life, and the inmost feelings of her heart, as the key-note of her song of praise:

'There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.'

THE END.

Annotated Edition of the English Poets.

BY ROBERT BELL.

Publishing in Volumes, 2s. 6d. each, bound in cloth.

Poems of Greene and Marlowe. With Biographies and Notes. 2s. 6d.

Early Ballads, illustrative of History, Traditions, and Customs. With Introductions and Notes. 2s. 6d.

Chaucer's Poetical Works.
With Notes, Memoir, and Glossary. Eight Volumes. 20s.

Butler's Poetical Works.
With Notes and Memoir. Three Volumes. 7s. 6d.

Thomson's Poetical Works.
With Notes and Memoir. Two Volumes. 5s.

Shakspeare's Poems.
With Notes and Memoir. 2s. 6d.

Dryden's Poetical Works.
Including a complete Collection of his Prologues and Epilogues, with a Memoir and Notes. Three Volumes. 7s. 6d.

Cowper's Poetical Works.
With Illustrative Selections from the Works of Lloyd, Cotton, Brooke, Darwin, and Hayley. With Notes and Memoirs, containing unpublished Letters of Cowper. Three Volumes. 7s. 6d.

Poetical Works of the Earl of Surrey, of Minor Contemporaneous Poets, and of Sackville, Lord Buckhurst. With Notes and Memoirs. 2s. 6d.

Songs from the Dramatists.
From the first regular Comedy to the close of the 18th Century; including the Songs of Shakspeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Peele, Webster, &c.; Shirley, Suckling, Dryden, Etherege, and the Writers of the Restoration; Vanbrugh, Congreve, Farquhar, Sheridan, &c. With Notes, Memoirs, and Index. Second Edition. 2s. 6d.

Wyatt's Poetical Works.
With Notes and Memoir. 2s. 6d.

Oldham's Poetical Works.
With Notes and Memoir. 2s. 6d.

Waller's Poetical Works.
With Notes and Memoir. 2s. 6d.

Ben Jonson's Poems.
With Notes and Memoir. 2s. 6d.

LONDON: JOHN W. PARKER AND SON, WEST STRAND.

Octavo, price 7s. 6d. each.

Cambridge Essays, 1856.

Roman Law and Legal Education. By H. S. Maine, LL.D., late Professor of Civil Law; Trinity Hall.

On English Ethnography. By J. W. Donaldson, D.D., late Fellow of Trinity College.

Old Studies and New. By John Grote, M.A., Professor of Moral Philosophy; Fellow of Trinity College.

Taste for the Picturesque among the Greeks. By E. M. Cope, M.A., Fellow of Trinity College.

The Apocryphal Gospels. By J. C. Ellicott, M.A., late Fellow of St. John's College.

The Protestant Church and Religious Liberty in France. By W. H. Waddington, M.A., Trinity.

The Fly-fisher and his Library. By H. R. Francis, M.A., St. John's College.

The Text of Shakespeare. By Charles Badham, D.D., St. Peter's College.

Coleridge. By F. J. A. Hort, M.A., Fellow of Trinity.

Oxford Essays, 1856.

Comparative Mythology. By Max Müller, M.A., Christ Church; Taylorean Professor.

The Growth of Laws and Usages of War. By Montagu Bernard, B.C.L., Trinity College.

The Raphael Drawings in the University Galleries. By the Rev. George Butler, M.A., late Fellow of Exeter College.

The Land-System of Ireland. By W. O'Connor Morris, B.A., Oriel.

National Education. By the Rev. Frederick Temple, M.A., late Fellow of Balliol College.

Carlovingian Romance. By Richard John King, M.A., Exeter.

Review of Mr. Congreve's 'Roman Empire of the West.' By Goldwin Smith, M.A., Fellow of University College.

London: JOHN W. PARKER AND SON, WEST STRAND.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 045860126